

AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE SECOND BOOK OF

C H R O N I C L E S.

This book begins with the reign of Solomon, and the building of the temple, and continues the history of the kings of Judah thenceforward, to the captivity; and so concludes with the fall of that illustrious monarchy, and the destruction of the temple. That monarchy of the house of David, as it was prior in time, so it was superior in worth and dignity, to all those four celebrated ones which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of. The Babylonian monarchy I reckon to begin in Nebuchadnezzar himself: *Thou art that head of gold*, that lasted but about seventy years; the Persian monarchy, in several families, about one hundred and thirty; the Grecian, in their several branches, about three hundred; and three hundred more went far with the Roman; but as I reckon David a greater hero than any of the founders of those monarchies, and Solomon a more magnificent prince than any of those that were the glories of them, so the succession was kept up in a lineal descent throughout the whole monarchy, which continued considerable between four and five hundred years; and, after a long eclipse, shone forth again in the kingdom of the Messiah, *of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end*. This history of the Jewish monarchy, as it is more authentic, so it is more entertaining and more instructive, than the histories of any of those monarchies. We had the story of the house of David, before, in the first and second books of Kings, intermixed with that of the kings of Israel, which *there* took more room than that of Judah; but here, we have it entire. Much is repeated here, which we had before, yet many of the passages of the story are enlarged upon, and divers added, which we had not before, especially relating to the affairs of religion; for it is a church-history, and it is written for our learning, to let nations and families know that then, and then only, they can expect to prosper, when they keep in the way of their duty to God; for, all along, the good kings prospered, and the wicked kings suffered. The peaceable reign of Solomon we have, *ch.* 1..9. the blemished reign of Rehoboam, *ch.* 10..12. the short but busy reign of Abijah, *ch.* 13. the long and happy reign of Asa, *ch.* 14..16, the pious and prosperous reign of Jehoshaphat, *ch.* 17..20. the impious and infamous reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah, *ch.* 21,22. the unsteady reigns of Joash and Amaziah, *ch.* 24, 25. the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah, *ch.* 26. the regular reign of Jotham, *ch.* 27. the profane and wicked reign of Ahaz, *ch.* 28. the gracious glorious reign of Hezekiah, *ch.* 29..32. the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, *ch.* 33. the reforming reign of Josiah, *ch.* 34, 35. the ruining reigns of his sons, *ch.* 36. Put all these together, and the truth of that word of God will appear; *They that honour me, I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*. The learned Mr. Whiston, in his chronology, suggests that the historical books which were written after the captivity, namely, the two books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, have more mistakes in names and numbers than all the books of the Old Testament besides, through the carelessness of transcribers: but though that should be allowed, the things are so very minute, that we may be confident, *The foundation of God stands sure*, notwithstanding.

CHAP. I.

In the close of the foregoing book, we read how God magnified Solomon, and Israel obeyed him; God and Israel concurred to honour him. Now here, we have an account, I. How he honoured God by sacrifice, v. 1. . 6. and by prayer v. 7. . 12. II. How he honoured Israel, by increasing their strength, wealth, and trade, v. 13. . 17.

1. **AND** Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly. 2. Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers. 3. So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses, the servant of the LORD, had made in the wilderness. 4. But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 5. Moreover, the brazen altar that Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD; and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it. 6. And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon it. 7. In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. 8. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. 9. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people *that is so* great? 11. And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: 12. Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

Here is,

I. Solomon's great prosperity, v. 1. Though he had a contested title, yet, God being with him, he *was strengthened in his kingdom*; his heart and

hands were strengthened, and his interest in the people. God's presence will be our strength.

II. His great piety and devotion. His father was a prophet, a psalmist, and he kept mostly to the ark; but Solomon having read much in his Bible concerning the tabernacle which Moses built, and the altars there, paid more respect to them than, it should seem, David had done. Both did well, and let neither be censured. Let not the man whose zeal is employed chiefly in one religious direction, despise him whose zeal is employed chiefly in another. Let them not judge, or despise, one another.

1. All his great men must thus far be good men, that they must join with him in worshipping God. He spake to the captains and judges, the governors and chief of the fathers, to go with him to Gibeon, v. 2. 3. Authority and interest are well bestowed on those that will thus use it for the glory of God, and the promoting of religion. It is our duty to engage those with whom we have influence, in the solemnities of religion, and it is very desirable to have many join with us in those solemnities; the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Solomon began his reign with this public pious visit to God's altar, and it was a very good omen. Magistrates are then likely to do well for themselves and their people, when they thus take God along with them at their setting out.

2. He offered abundance of sacrifices to God there, v. 6, *a thousand burnt-offerings*, and perhaps a greater number of peace-offerings, on which he and his company *fasted before the Lord*. Where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly. His father David had left him flocks and herds in abundance, 1 Chron. 27. 29, 31. and thus he gave God his dues out of them. The ark was at Jerusalem, v. 4. but the altar was at Gibeon, v. 5. and thither he brought his sacrifices; for it is the altar that sanctifieth every gift.

3. He prayed a good prayer to God: this, with the answer to it, we had before, 1 Kings 3. 5, &c. (1.) God bade him ask what he would; not only that he might put him in the right way of obtaining the favours that were intended him, (*Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,*) but that he might try him, how he stood affected, and might discover what was in his heart. Men's characters appear in their choices and desires. What wouldest thou *have*? tries a man as much as, What wouldest thou *do*? Thus God tried whether Solomon was one of the children of this world, that say, *Who will show us any good?* or of the children of light, that say, *Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us*. As we choose, we shall have, and that is likely to be our portion, to which we gave the preference, whether the wealth and pleasure of this world, or spiritual riches and delights. (2.) Like a genuine son of David, he chose spiritual blessings rather than temporal. His petition here is, *Give me wisdom and knowledge*. He owns those to be desirable gifts, and God, the Giver of them, Prov. 2. 6. God gave the faculty of understanding, and to him we must apply ourselves for the furniture of it. Two things are here pleaded, which we had not in Kings: [1.] *Thou hast made me reign in my father's stead*, v. 8. "Lord, thou hast put me into this place: and therefore I can in faith ask of thee grace to enable me to do the duty of it." What service we have reason to believe God calls us to, we have reason to hope he will qualify us for. But that is not all; "Lord, thou hast put me into this place in the stead of David, the great and good man that filled it up so well; therefore give me wisdom, that Israel may not suffer damage by the change. Must I reign in my father's stead? Lord, give me my father's spirit."

Note, The eminency of those that went before us, and the obligation that lies upon us to keep up and carry on the good work they were engaged in, should provoke us to a gracious emulation, and quicken our prayers to God for wisdom and grace, that we may do the work of God in our day, as faithfully and well as they did in their's. [2.] *Let thy promise to David my father be established, v. 9.* He means the promise concerning his successor. "In performance of that promise, *Lord give me wisdom.*" We do not find that wisdom was any of the things promised, but it was necessary in order to the accomplishment of what was promised, 2 Sam. 7. 13. 15. The promise was, *He shall build a house for my name, I will establish his throne, he shall be my son, and my mercy shall not depart from him.* Now, Lord, unless thou give me wisdom, thy house will not be built, nor my throne established; I shall behave in a manner unbecoming my relation to thee as a Father, shall forfeit thy mercy, and fool it away; therefore, *Lord, give me wisdom.* Note, *First*, God's promises are our best pleas in prayer; *Remember thy word unto thy servant.* *Secondly*, Children may take the comfort of the promises of that covenant which their parents, in their baptism, laid claim to, and took hold of, for them. *Thirdly*, The best way to obtain the benefit of the promises and privileges of the covenant, is, to be earnest in prayer with God for wisdom and grace to do the duties of it.

4. He received a gracious answer to this prayer, v. 11, 12. (1.) God gave him the wisdom that he asked for, because he asked for it. Wisdom is a gift that God gives as freely and liberally as any gift, to those that value it, and wrestle for it, and will resolve to make use of it; and he upbraids not the poor petitioners with their folly, James 1. 5. God's grace shall never be wanting to those who sincerely desire to know and do their duty. (2.) God gave him the wealth and honour which he did not ask for, because he asked not for it. Those that pursue the present things most earnestly, are most likely to miss of them; while those that refer themselves to the providence of God, if they have not the most of those things, have the most comfort in them. Those that make this world their end, come short of the other, and are disappointed in this too; but those that make the other world their end, shall not only obtain that, and full satisfaction in it, but shall take as much as is convenient of this world in their way.

13. Then Solomon came *from his journey* to the high place that *was* at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel. 14. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot-cities, and with the king of Jerusalem. 15. And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem *as plenteous* as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that *are* in the vale for abundance. 16. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn; the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 17. And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt, a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so brought they

out horses for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

Here is, 1. Solomon's entrance upon the government, v. 13. he came *from before the tabernacle, and reigned over Israel.* He would not do any acts of government till he had done his acts of devotion; would not take honour to himself till he had given honour to God; first the tabernacle, and then the throne. But when he had obtained wisdom from God, he did not bury his talent, but as he had received the gift, ministered the same, did not give up himself to ease and pleasure, but minded business; he reigned over Israel.

2. The magnificence of his court, v. 14, *He gathered chariots and horsemen.* Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; for the king was forbidden to multiply horses, Deut. 17. 16. I do not remember that ever we find his good father in a chariot, or on horseback; a mule was the highest he mounted. We should endeavour to excel those that went before us in goodness, rather than in grandeur.

3. The wealth and trade of his kingdom. He made silver and gold very cheap and common, v. 15. The increase of gold lowers the value of it; but the increase of grace advances its price; the more men have of that, the more they value it; *how much better therefore is it to get wisdom than gold!* He opened also a trade with Egypt, whence he imported horses and linen yarn, which he exported again to the kings of Syria, with great advantage, no doubt, v. 16, 17. This we had before, 1 Kings 10. 28, 29. It is the wisdom of princes to promote industry, and encourage trade, in their dominions. Perhaps Solomon took the hint of setting up the linen-manufacture, bringing linen-yarn out of Egypt, working it into cloth, and then sending that to other nations, from what his mother taught when she specified this, among other employments of the virtuous woman. *She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles of it to the merchant,* Prov. 31. 24. In all labour there is profit.

CHAP. II.

Solomon's trading, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, and the encouragement he gave both to merchandise and manufacture, were very commendable. But building was the work he was designed for, and to that business he is here applying himself. Here is, I. Solomon's determination to build the temple and a royal palace, and his appointing of labourers to be employed herein, v. 1, 2, 17, 18. II. His request to Hiram king of Tyre, to furnish him both with artists and materials, v. 3. 10. III. Hiram's obliging answer to, and compliance with, his requests, v. 11. 16.

1. **A**ND Solomon determined to build a house for the name of the LORD, and a house for his kingdom. 2. And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them. 3. And Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him a house to dwell therein, *even so deal with me.* 4. Behold, I build a house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual show-bread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new

moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This *is an ordinance* for ever to Israel. 5. And the house which I build *is great*: for great *is our God* above all gods. 6. But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who *am I* then, that I should build him a house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? 7. Send me now, therefore, a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that *are* with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide. 8. Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and alnum-trees, out of Lebanon; (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;) and, behold, my servants *shall be* with thy servants, 9. Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build *shall be* wonderful great. 10. And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

Solomon's wisdom was given him, not merely for speculation to entertain himself, (though it is indeed a princely entertainment,) nor merely for conversation to entertain his friends, but for action; and therefore to action he immediately applies himself. Observe,

I. His resolution within himself concerning his business, *v. 1. He determined to build*, in the first place, *a house for the name of the Lord*. It is fit that he who is the first, should be first served; first a temple, and then a palace; a house, not so much for himself and his own convenience and magnitude, as for the kingdom, for the honour of it among its neighbours, and for the decent reception of the people, whenever they had occasion to apply themselves to their prince; so that in both, he aimed at the public good. Those are the wisest men that lay out themselves most for the honour of the name of the Lord, and the welfare of communities: we are not born for ourselves, but for God and our country.

II. His embassy to Hiram, king of Tyre, to engage his assistance in the prosecution of his designs. The purport of his errand to him, is much the same here as we had it, 1 Kings 5. 2. &c. only here it is more largely set forth.

1. The reasons why he makes this application to Hiram, are here more fully represented, for information to Hiram, as well as for inducement.

(1.) He pleads his father's interest in Hiram, and the kindness he had received from him, *v. 3. As thou didst deal with David, so deal with me*. As we must show kindness to, so we may expect kindness from, our father's friends; and with them should cultivate a correspondence.

(2.) He represents his design in building the temple; he intended it for a place of religious worship, *v. 4. that all the offerings which God had appointed for the honour of his name, might be offered up there*. The house was built that it might be dedicated to God, and used in his service; this we should

aim at in all our business, that our havings and doings may be all to the glory of God. He mentions divers particular services that were there to be performed, for the instruction of Hiram. The mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstition, coveted not concealment.

(3.) He endeavours to possess Hiram with great and high thoughts of the God of Israel, by expressing the mighty veneration he had for his holy name. *Great is our God above all gods*, above all idols, above all princes. Idols are nothing, princes are little, and both under the control of the God of Israel; and therefore, [1.] "The house must be great; not in proportion to the greatness of that God to whom it is to be dedicated, (for between finite and infinite there can be no proportion,) but in some proportion to the great value and esteem we have for this God." [2.] "Yet, be it never so great, it cannot be a habitation for the great God: let not Hiram think that the God of Israel, like the gods of the nations, *dwells in temples made with hands*, Acts 17. 24. no, the *heaven of heavens cannot contain him*. It is intended only for the convenience of the priests and worshippers, that they may have a fit place wherein to burn sacrifice before him." [3.] He looked upon himself, though a mighty prince, as unworthy the honour of being employed in this great work. *Who am I, that I should build a house?* It is part of the wisdom wherein we ought to walk toward them that are without, carefully to guard against all misapprehension, which any thing we say or do, may occasion, concerning God; so Solomon does here in his treaty with Hiram.

2. The requests he makes to him, are more particularly set down here. (1.) He desires Hiram would furnish him with a good hand to work, *v. 7. send me a man*. He had *cunning men* with him in Jerusalem and Judah, whom David provided, 1 Chron. 22. 15. Let them not think but that the Jews had some among them that were artists; but *send me a man* to direct them. "There are ingenious men in Jerusalem, but not such engravers as are in Tyre; and therefore, since temple-work must be the best in its kind, let me have the best workmen that can be got." (2.) With good materials to work on, *v. 8. cedar, and other timber in abundance, v. 8, 9. for the house must be wonderful great*, that is, very stately and magnificent, no cost must be spared, nor any contrivance wanting in it.

3. Here is Solomon's engagement to maintain the workmen, *v. 10. to give them so much wheat and barley, so much wine and oil*. He did not feed his workmen with bread and water, but with plenty, and every thing of the best. They that employ labourers, ought to take care they be not only well paid, but well provided for with sufficient of that which is wholesome and fit for them. Let the rich masters do for their poor workmen, as they would be done by, if the tables were turned.

11. Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them. 12. Hiram said moreover, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build a house for the LORD, and a house for his kingdom. 13. And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's. 14. The son of a woman of the

daughters of Dan, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father. 15. Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: 16. And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need; and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa, and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem. 17. And Solomon numbered all the strangers that *were* in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found a hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred. 18. And he set threescore and ten thousand of them *to be* bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand *to be* hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work.

Here we have,

I. The return which Hiram made to Solomon's embassy, in which he shows a great respect for Solomon, and a readiness to serve him. Lesser people may learn of those great ones to be neighbourly and complaisant.

1. He congratulates Israel, on having such a king as Solomon was, *v. 11*, *Because the Lord loved his people, he has made thee king*. Note, A wise and good government is a great blessing to a people, and may well be accounted a singular token of God's favour. He does not say, *Because he loved thee*, (though that was true, 2 Sam. 12. 24.) he *made thee king*, but because he *loved his people*. Princes must look upon themselves as preferred for the public good, not for their own personal satisfaction, and should rule so, as to prove that they were given in love, and not in anger.

2. He blesses God for raising up such a successor to David, *v. 12*. It should seem that Hiram was not only very well affected to the Jewish nation, and well pleased with their prosperity, but that he was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and worshipped Jehovah, *the God of Israel*, (who was not known by that name to the neighbouring nations,) as *the God that made heaven and earth*, and as the Fountain of power as well as being; for he sets up kings. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, and so preserved their honour, the neighbouring nations were as willing to be instructed by them in the true religion, as *they* had been, in the days of their apostasy, to be infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. This made them high, that they lent to many nations and did not borrow, lent truth to them, and did not borrow error from them; as when they did the contrary, it was their shame.

3. He sent him a very ingenious curious workman, that would not fail to answer his expectations in every thing. One that had both Jewish and Gentile blood meeting in him; for his mother was an Israelite, (Hiram thought she was of the tribe of Dan, and therefore says so here, *v. 14*. but, it

seems, she was of the tribe of Naphtali, 1 Kings 7. 14.) and his father was a Tyrian; a good omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in the gospel-temple; as it was afterward when the building of the second temple was greatly furthered by Darius, (Ezra 6.) who is supposed to have been the son of Esther, an Israelite by his mother's side.

4. He engaged for the timber, as much as he would have occasion for, and undertook to deliver it at Joppa; and, withal, signified his dependence upon Solomon for the maintenance of the workmen, as he had promised, *v. 15, 16*. This agreement we had, 1 Kings 5. 8, 9.

II. The orders which Solomon gave about the workmen. He would not employ the free-born Israelites in the drudgery-work of the temple itself, not so much as to be overseers of it; in this, he employed the strangers who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, who had not lands of inheritance in Canaan, as the Israelites had, and therefore applied themselves to trades, and got their living by their ingenuity and industry: there was, at this time, a vast number of them in the land, *v. 17*. who, if they were of any of the devoted nations, perhaps fell within the case, and therefore fell under the law, of the Gibeonites, to be hewers of wood for the congregation; if not, yet being, in many cases, well provided for by the law of Moses, and put upon an equal footing with the native Israelites, they were bound in gratitude to do what they could for the service of the temple; yet, no doubt, they were well paid in money, or money's worth; the law was, *Thou shalt not oppress a stranger*. The distribution of them we have here, *v. 2*. and again, *v. 18*. in all, 150,000. Canaan was a fruitful land, that found meat for so many mouths more than the numerous natives; and the temple, a vast building, that found work for so many hands. Mr. Fuller suggests that the expedient peculiar to this structure, of framing all before hand, must needs increase the work; I think it rather left so much the more room for this vast multitude of hands to be employed in it; for in the forest of Lebanon they might all be at work together, without crowding one another, which they could not have been upon mount Sion. And if there had not been such vast numbers employed, so large and curious a fabric, which was begun and ended in 7 years, might, for aught I know, have been as long in building as St. Paul's.

CHAP. III.

It was a much larger and more particular account of the building of the temple, which we had in the book of Kings, than is here in this book of Chronicles. In this chapter, we have, I. The place, and time, of building the temple, *v. 1, 2*. II. The dimensions, and rich ornaments of it, *v. 3-9*. III. The cherubims in the most holy place, *v. 10-13*. IV. The veil, *v. 14*. V. The two pillars, *v. 15-17*. Of all which we have already had an account, 1 Kings 6. 7.

1. **T**HEN Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 2. And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign. 3. Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits, after the first measure, was threescore cubits, and

the breadth twenty cubits. 4. And the porch that *was* in the front of the house, the length of it *was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height *was* a hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold. 5. And the greater house he ceiled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains. 6. And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold *was* gold of Parvaim. 7. He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls. 8. And he made the most holy house, the length whereof *was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents. 9. And the weight of the nails *was* fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

Here is,

1. The place where the temple was built. Solomon was neither at liberty to choose, nor at a loss to fix the place. It was before determined, 1 Chron. 22. 1. which was an ease to his mind. (1.) It must be at Jerusalem; for that was the place where God had chosen to put his name there. The royal city must be the holy city: *there must be the testimony of Israel; for there are set the thrones of judgment*, Ps. 122. 4, 5. (2.) It must be on mount Moriah; which, some think, was that very place in the land of Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac, Gen. 22. 2. So the Targum says expressly, adding, *But he was delivered by the word of the Lord, and a ram provided in his place*. That was typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself; therefore fitly was the temple, which was likewise a type of him, built there. (3.) It must be where the Lord appeared to David, and answered him by fire, 1 Chron. 21. 18, 26. There atonement was made once; and therefore, in remembrance of that, there atonement must still be made. There where God has met with me, it is to be hoped that he will still. (4.) It must be in the place which David had prepared, not only which he had purchased with his money, but which he had pitched upon by divine direction. It was Solomon's wisdom not to inquire out a more convenient place, but to acquiesce in the appointment of God, whatever might be objected against it. (1.) It must be in the threshing-floor of Ornan, which, if (as a Jebusite) it gives encouragement to the Gentiles, yet it obliges us to look upon the temple-work, as that which requires the labour of the mind, no less than threshing-work does that of the body.

2. The time when it was begun; not till the 4th year of Solomon's reign, v. 2. Not that the 3 first years were trifled away, or spent in deliberating whether they should build the temple or no; but they were employed in the necessary preparations for it, wherein 3 years would be soon gone, considering how many hands were to be got together, and set to work. Some conjecture that this was a sabbatical year, or year of release and rest to the land, when the people, being discharged from their husbandry, might more easily lend a hand to the beginning of this work; and then the year it was finished, would fall out to be another sabbatical

year, when they would likewise have leisure to attend the solemnity of the dedication of it.

3. The dimensions of it; in which Solomon was instructed, v. 3. as he was in other things, by his father. *This was the foundation*, (so it may be read) *which Solomon laid for the building of the house*. This was the rule he went by, so many cubits the length and breadth, after the first measure, that is according to the measure first fixed, which there was no reason to make an alteration of, when the work came to be done: for the dimensions were given by divine wisdom; and *what God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it or taken from it*, Eccl. 3. 14. His first measure will be the last.

4. The ornaments of the temple; the timber-work was very fine, and yet, within, it was overlaid with pure gold, v. 4. with fine gold, v. 5. and that embossed with palm-trees and chains. It was of gold of Parvaim, v. 6. the best gold. The beams and posts, the walls and doors, were overlaid with gold, v. 7. The most holy place, which was ten yards square, was all overlaid with fine gold, v. 8. even the upper chambers, or rather the upper floor or roof; top, bottom, and sides, were all overlaid with gold. Every nail, or screw, or pin, with which the golden plates were fastened to the walls that were overlaid with them, weighed 50 shekels, or was worth so much; workmanship and all. A great many precious stones were dedicated to God, 1 Chron. 29. 2, 8. and these were set here and there, where they would show to the best advantage. The finest houses now pretend to no better garnishing than good paint on the roof and walls; but the ornaments of the temple were more substantially rich. It was set with precious stones, because it was a type of the new Jerusalem, which has therefore no temple in it, because it is all temple, and the walls, gates, and foundations of which, are said to be of precious stones and pearls, Rev. 21. 18, 19, 21.

10. And in the most holy place he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold. 11. And the wings of the cherubims were twenty cubits long: one wing of the one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was likewise five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub. 12. And one wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits also, joining to the wing of the other cherub. 13. The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward. 14. And he made the vail of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon. 15. Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapter that was on the top of each of them was five cubits. 16. And he made chains, as in the oracle, and put them on the heads of the pillars; and made a hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. 17. And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left

and called the name of that on the right hand *Jachin*, and the name of that on the left *Boaz*.

Here is an account of, 1. The two cherubims, which were set up in the holy of holies. There were two already over the ark, which covered the mercy-seat with their wings; those were small ones. Now that the most holy place was enlarged, though those were continued, (being appurtenances to the ark, which was not to be made new, as all the other utensils of the tabernacle were,) yet those two large ones were added, doubtless, by divine appointment, to fill up the holy place; which otherwise would look bare, like a room unfurnished. These cherubims are said to be of *image-work*, v. 10, designed, it is likely, to represent the angels who attend the divine Majesty. Each wing extended 5 cubits, so that the whole was 20 cubits, v. 12, 13, which was just the breadth of the most holy place, v. 8. They stood on their feet, as servants, their faces inward toward the ark, v. 13, that it might appear they were not set there to be adored, (for then they would have been made sitting, as on a throne, and their faces toward their worshippers,) but rather as themselves attendants on the invisible God. We must not worship angels, but we must worship *with* angels; for we are come into communion with them, Heb. 12. 22, and must do the will of God as the angels do it. The thought that we are worshipping him before whom the angels cover their faces, will help to inspire us with reverence in all our approaches to God. Compare 1 Cor. 11. 10. with Isa. 6. 2.

2. The vail that parted between the temple and the most holy place, v. 14. This denoted the darkness of that dispensation, and the distance which the worshippers were kept at; but, at the death of Christ, this vail was rent; for through him we are made nigh, and have boldness not only to look, but to enter, into the holiest. On this he wrought cherubims, Heb. *he caused them to ascend*, that is, they were made in raised work, embossed. Or he made them on the wing in an ascending posture, to remind the worshippers to lift up their hearts, and to soar upward in their devotions.

3. The two pillars which were set up before the temple. Both together were somewhat above 35 cubits in length, v. 15, about 18 cubits high apiece: see 1 Kings 7. 15, &c. We there took a view of those pillars, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, *establishment* and *strength* in temple-work, and by it.

CHAP. IV.

We have here a further account of the furniture of God's house. I. Those things that were of brass. The altar for burnt-offerings, v. 1. the sea and lavers to hold water, v. 2. . . 6. the plates with which the doors of the court were overlaid, v. 9. the vessels of the altar, and other things, v. 10. . . 18. II. Those that were of gold. The candlesticks and tables, v. 7, 8. the altar of incense, v. 19. and the appurtenances of each of these, v. 20. . . 22. All these, except the brazen altar, v. 1. were accounted for more largely, 1 Kings 7. 23, &c.

1. **M**OREOVER, he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof. 2. Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 3. And under it *was* the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about; ten in a

cubit, compassing the sea round about: Two rows of oxen *were* cast when it was cast. 4. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; and the sea *was set* above upon them, and all their hinder parts *were* inward. 5. And the thickness of it *was* a hand-breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; *and* it received and held three thousand baths. 6. He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt-offering they washed in them; but the sea *was* for the priests to wash in. 7. And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set *them* in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left. 8. He made also ten tables, and placed *them* in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left: and he made a hundred basons of gold. 9. Furthermore, he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass. 10. And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

David often speaks with much affection, both of the *house of the Lord*, and of the *courts of our God*. Both without doors and within, there was that which typified the grace of the gospel, and *shadowed out good things to come*, of which the substance is Christ.

1. There were those things in open court, in the view of all the people, which were very significant.

1. There *was* the *brazen altar*, v. 1. The making of this was not mentioned in the Kings. On this, all the sacrifices were offered, and it sanctified the gift. This altar was much larger than that which Moses made in the tabernacle; that was 5 cubits square, this was twenty cubits square. Now Israel was become both more numerous and more rich, and, it was to be hoped, more devout, (for every age should aim to be wiser and better than that which went before it,) it was expected that there would be a greater abundance of offerings brought to God's altar than had been: it is therefore made such a capacious scaffold, that it might hold them all, and none might excuse themselves from bringing those testimonies of their devotion by alleging that there was not room to receive them. God had greatly enlarged their borders, it was therefore fit that they should enlarge his altars. Our returns should bear some proportion to our receivings. It was 10 cubits high, so that the people who worshipped in the courts, might see the sacrifices burnt, and their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for sin: "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not thus consumed, and that this is accepted as an expiation of my guilt." They might thus be led to consider the great Sacrifice which should be offered in the fulness of time, to take away sin, and abolish death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly do. And with the smoke of the sacrifices their hearts might ascend to heaven in holy desires toward God and his favour. In all our devotions, we

must keep the eye of faith fixed upon Christ, the great Propitiation. How they went up to this altar, and carried the sacrifices up to it, we are not told; some think by a plain ascent like a hill; if by steps, doubtless they were so contrived, as that the end of the law, mentioned Exod. 20. 26. might be answered.

2. There was the molten sea. A very large brass pan, in which they put water for the priests to wash in, *v.* 2. 6. It was put just at the entrance into the court of the priests, like the font at the church-door. If it were filled to the brim, it would hold 3000 baths, as here, *v.* 5. but in common, there were only 2000 baths in it, 1 Kings 7. 26. The Holy Ghost by this signified, (1.) Our great gospel-*privilege*, that the *blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, 1 John 1. 7. To us there is a *fountain opened* for all believers, (who are spiritual priests, Rev. 1. 5, 6.) nay, for *all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash in*, from sin, which is uncleanness. There is a fulness of merit in Jesus Christ, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him for the purifying of their consciences, that they may serve the *living God*, Heb. 9. 14. (2.) Our great gospel-*duty*, which is to cleanse ourselves by true repentance from all the pollutions, of the flesh, and the corruption that is in the world. Our hearts must be sanctified, or we cannot sanctify the name of God. They that draw nigh to God, must *cleanse their hands, and purify their hearts*, Jam. 4. 8. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*; and he that *is washed*, still needs to *wash his feet*, to renew his repentance whenever he *goes in to minister*, John 13. 10.

3. There were *ten lavers* of brass, in which *they washed such things as they offered for the burnt-offerings*, *v.* 6. as the priests must be washed, so must the sacrifices. We must not only purify ourselves in preparation for our religious performances, but carefully put away all those vain thoughts, and corrupt aims, which cleave to our performances themselves, and pollute them.

4. The doors of the court were overlaid with brass, *v.* 9. both for strength and beauty, and that they might not be rotted with the weather, to which they were exposed. *Gates of brass*, we read of, Ps. 107. 16.

II. There were those things in the house of the Lord, (into which the priests went only in to minister,) that were very significant. All was of gold there. The nearer we come to God, the purer we must be, the purer we shall be.

1. There were 10 *golden candlesticks*, according to the form of that one which was in the tabernacle, *v.* 7. The written word is a lamp and a light, shining in a dark place. In Moses's time, they had but one candlestick, the Pentateuch; but the additions, which, in process of time, were to be made of other books of scripture, might be signified by this increase of the number of the candlesticks. Light was growing. The candlesticks are the churches, Rev. 1. 20. Moses set up but one, the church of the Jews; but, in the gospel-temple, not only believers, but churches, are multiplied.

2. There were 10 *golden tables*, *v.* 1. *Tables whereon the show-bread was set*, *v.* 19. Perhaps every one of the tables had 12 loaves of show-bread on it. As the house was enlarged, the house-keeping was. *In my father's house there is bread enough for the whole family*. To those tables belonged a hundred golden basins, or dishes; for God's table is well furnished.

3. There was a *golden altar*, *v.* 19. on which they burnt incense. It is probable that this was enlarged in proportion to the brazen altar. Christ, who, once for all, made atonement for sin, ever lives, making intercession, in virtue of that atonement.

11. And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basons. And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God; 12. *To wit*, the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters *which were* on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters *which were* on the top of the pillars: 13. And four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapiters *which were* upon the pillars. 14. He made also bases; and lavers made he upon the bases; 15. One sea, and twelve oxen under it: 16. The pots also, and the shovels, and the flesh-hooks, and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to king Solomon, for the house of the LORD, of bright brass. 17. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay-ground between Succoth and Zeredathah. 18. Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out. 19. And Solomon made all the vessels that *were for* the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the show-bread *was set*; 20. Moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner, before the oracle, of pure gold; 21. And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, *made he of gold, and that perfect gold*; 22. And the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers, *of pure gold*: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for the most holy place, and the doors of the house of the temple, *were of gold*.

We have here such a summary, both of the brass-work, and the gold-work of the temple, as we had before, 1 Kings 7. 13, &c. in which we have nothing more to observe, than, (1.) That Hiram the workman was very punctual: *he finished all that he was to make*, *v.* 11. and left no part of his work undone. *Hiram his father*, he is called, *v.* 16. Probably, it was a sort of a nick-name by which he was commonly known, *Father Hiram*; for the king of Tyre called him *Hiram Abi, my father*; in compliance with whom Solomon called him his; he being a great artist, and *father of the artificers* in brass and iron. He acquitted himself well, both for ingenuity and industry. (2.) Solomon was very generous. He made *all the vessels in great abundance*, *v.* 18. many of a sort, that many hands might be employed, and so the work might go on with expedition; or that some might be laid up for use when others were worn out. Freely he has received, and he will freely give. When he had made vessels enough for the present, he would not convert the remainder of the brass to his own use; it is devoted to God, and it shall be used for him.

CHAP. V.

The temple being built and furnished for God, we have here, I. Possession given to him, by bringing in the de-

dedicated things, v. 1. but especially the ark, the token of his presence, v. 2...10. 11. Possession taken by him, in a cloud, v. 11..14. For if any man open the door of his heart to God, he will come in. *Rev.* 3. 20.

1. **T**HUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God. 2. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3. Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king, in the feast which was in the seventh month. 4. And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark. 5. And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up. 6. Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 7. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, *even* under the wings of the cherubims: 8. For the cherubims spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 9. And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. 10. *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put *therein* at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

This agrees with what we had, 1 Kings 8. 2, &c. where an account was given of the solemn introducing of the ark into the new-erected temple.

1. There needed no great solemnity for the bringing in of the dedicated things, v. 1. They added to the wealth, and perhaps were so disposed as to add to the beauty, of it; but they could not add to the holiness; for it was the temple that sanctified the gold, *Matth.* 23. 17. See how just Solomon was both to God and to his father. Whatever David had dedicated to God, however much he might have liked it himself, yet he would by no means alienate it, but put it among the treasures of the temple. Those children that would inherit their godly parents' blessing, must religiously pursue their pious intentions, and not defeat them. When Solomon had made all the vessels of the temple in abundance, *ch.* 4. 18. many of the materials were left, which he would not convert to any other use,

but laid it up in the treasury for a time of need. Dedicated things must not be alienated. It is sacrilege to do it.

2. But it was fit that the ark should be brought in with great solemnity; and so it was. All the other vessels were made new, and larger, in proportion to the house, than they had been in the tabernacle; but the ark, the mercy-seat, and the cherubims were the same; for the presence and the grace of God are the same in little assemblies that they are in large ones, in the poor condition of the church, that they are in its prosperous estate; wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is he as truly present with them, as if there were two or three thousand. The ark was brought in, attended by a very great assembly of the elders of Israel, who came to grace the solemnity; and a very sumptuous appearance, no doubt, they made, v. 2..4. It was carried by the priests, v. 7. brought into the most holy place, and put under the wings of the great cherubim which Solomon had set up there, v. 7, 8. *There they are unto this day:* not the day when this book was written after the captivity, but when that was written, out of which this story was transcribed. Or they were there (so it might be better read) unto this day, the day of Jerusalem's desolations, that fatal day, *Ps.* 137. 7. The ark was a type of Christ, and, as such, a token of the presence of God. That gracious promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, does, in effect, bring the ark into our religious assemblies, if we by faith and prayer put that promise in suit; and this we should be most solicitous and earnest for; *Lord, if thy presence go not up with us*, wherefore should we go up? The temple itself, if Christ leave it, is a desolate place, *Matth.* 23. 38.

3. With the ark they brought up the tabernacle, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, v. 5. They were not alienated, because they had been dedicated to God; not altered or melted down for the new work, because there was no need of them; but they were carefully laid up as monuments of antiquity; and, probably as many of the vessels as were fit for use, were still used.

4. This was done with great joy. They kept a holy feast upon the occasion, v. 3. and sacrificed sheep and oxen without number, v. 6. Note, (1.) The establishment of the public worship of God, according to his institution, and with the tokens of his presence, is, and ought to be, matter of great joy to any people. (2.) When Christ is formed in a soul, the law written in the heart, the ark of the covenant settled there, so that it becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, there is true satisfaction in that soul. (3.) Whatever we have the comfort of, we must, by the sacrifices of praise, give God the glory of, and not be straitened therein; for *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*. If God favour us with his presence, we must honour him with our services, the best we have.

11. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place; (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course; 12. Also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets;) 13. It came even to pass, as the trumpeters

and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he* is good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD; 14. So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

Solomon, and the elders of Israel, had done what they could to grace the solemnity of the introduction of the ark; but God, by testifying his acceptance of what they did, put the greatest honour upon it. The cloud of glory that filled the house, beautified it more than all the gold with which it was overlaid, or the precious stones with which it was garnished; and yet that was no glory, in comparison with the glory of the gospel-dispensation, 2 Cor. 3. 8..10. Observe,

I. How God took possession of the temple; he filled it with a cloud, v. 13. 1. Thus he signified his acceptance of this temple to be the same to him, that the tabernacle of Moses was, and assured them that he would be the same in it; for it was by a cloud that he made his public entry into that, Exod. 40. 34. 2. Thus he considered the weakness and infirmity of those to whom he manifested himself, who could not bear the dazzling lustre of the divine light, it would have overpowered them; he therefore spreads a cloud upon it, Job 26. 9. Christ revealed things unto his disciples as they were able to hear him, and in parables, which wrapped up divine things as in a cloud. 3. Thus he would affect all that worshipped in his courts with holy reverence and fear. Christ's disciples were afraid when they entered into a cloud, Luke 9. 34. 4. Thus he would intimate the darkness of that dispensation, by reason of which, they could not steadfastly look to the end of those things which were now abolished, 2 Cor. 3. 13.

II. When he took possession of it. 1. *When the priests were come out of the holy place*, v. 11. This is the way of giving possession. All must come out, that the rightful owner may come in. Would we have God dwell in our hearts? We must leave room for him; let every thing else give way. We are here told that upon this occasion, the whole family of the priests attended, and not any one particular course; *all the priests that were present were sanctified*, v. 11. because there was work enough for them all, when such a multitude of sacrifices were to be offered, and because it was fit that they should all be eye-witnesses of this solemnity, and receive the impressions of it. 2. When the singers and musicians praised God, then the house was filled with a cloud. This is very observable; it was not when they offered sacrifices, but when they sang the praises of God, that God gave them this token of favour; for the sacrifice of praise *pleaseth the Lord* better than that of an ox or bullcock, Ps. 69. 31. All the singers and musicians were employed, those of each of the three families; and, to complete the concert, 120 priests, with their trumpets, joined with them, all standing at the east end of the altar, on that side of the court which lay outmost toward the people, v. 12. And when this part of the service began, the glory of God appeared. Observe, (1.) It was when they were unanimous, when they were as one, to make one sound. The Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, when they met with one accord, Acts 2. 1. Where unity is, the Lord com-

mands the blessing. (2.) It was when they were lively and hearty, and *lifted up their voice to praise the Lord*. Then we serve God acceptably, when we are fervent in spirit, serving him. (3.) It was when they were, in their praises, celebrating the everlasting mercy and goodness of God. As there is no one saying oftener repeated in scripture than this, *his mercy endureth for ever*, (26 times in one psalm, Ps. 136. and often elsewhere,) so there is none more signally owned from heaven; for it was not the expression of some rapturous flights that the priests were singing when the glory of God appeared, but this plain song, *He is good, and his mercy endureth for ever*. This should endear those words to us. God's goodness is his glory, and he is pleased when we give him the glory of it.

III. What was the effect of it? *The priests themselves could not stand to minister, by reason of the cloud*, v. 14. which, as it was an evidence that the law made men priests that had infirmity, so (as Bishop Patrick observes) it was a plain intimation that the Levitical priesthood should cease, and stand no longer to minister, when the Messiah should come, in whom *the fullness of the Godhead should dwell bodily*. In him the glory of God dwelt among us, but covered with a cloud. The Word was made flesh; and when he comes to his temple, like a refiner's fire, *who may abide the day of his coming?* And *who shall stand when he appeareth?* Mal. 3. 1, 2.

CHAP. VI.

The glory of the Lord, in the vehicle of a thick cloud, having filled the house which Solomon built, by which God manifested his presence there, he immediately improves the opportunity, and addresses himself to God, as a God now, in a peculiar manner, nigh at hand. I. He makes a solemn declaration of his intention in building this house, to the satisfaction of the people, and the honour of God, both which he blessed, v. 1..11. II. He makes a solemn prayer to God, that he would please graciously to accept and answer all the prayers that should be made in, or toward that house, v. 12..42. This whole chapter we had before, with very little variation, 1 Kings 8. 12..53, to which it may not be amiss here to look back.

1. **THEN** said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 2. But I have built a house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever. 3. And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood :) 4. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled *that* which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, 5. Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel: 6. But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel. 7. Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 8. But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thy heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thy heart: 9. Notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the

house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. 10. The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken; for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel: 11. And in it have I put the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

It is of great consequence, in all our religious actions, that we design well, and that our eye be single. If Solomon had built this temple in the pride of his heart, as Ahasuerus made his feast, only to *show the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty*, it would not have turned at all to his account. But he here declares upon what inducements he undertook it, and they are such as not only justify, but magnify, the undertaking.

1. He did it for the glory and honour of God; this was his highest and ultimate end in it. It was *for the name of the Lord God of Israel*, v. 10. to be a *house of habitation for him*, v. 2. He has indeed, as to us, made *darkness his pavilion*, v. 1. but let this house be the residence of that darkness; for it is in the upper world that he dwells in light, such as no eye can approach.

2. He did it in compliance with the choice God had been pleased to make of Jerusalem, to be the city in which he would record his name, v. 6, *I have chosen Jerusalem*. A great many stately buildings there were in Jerusalem for the king, his princes, and the royal family. If God choose that place, it is fit that there be a building for him, which may exceed all the rest. Were men thus honoured there, let God be thus honoured.

3. He did it in pursuance of his father's good intentions, which he never had an opportunity to put in execution. *It was in the heart of David my father to build a house for God*; the project was his, be it known, to his honour, v. 7. and God approved of it, though he permitted him not to put it in execution, v. 8, *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart*. Temple-work is often thus done; one sows, and another reaps, John 4. 37, 38. one age begins that which the next brings to perfection; and let not the wisest of men think it any disparagement to them, to pursue the good designs which those that went before them, have laid, and to build upon their foundation. Every good piece is not an original.

4. He did it in the performance of the word which God had spoken. God had said, *Thy son shall build the house for my name*; and now he had done it, v. 9, 10. The service was appointed him, and the honour of it designed him, by the divine promise; so that he did not do it of his own head, but was called of God to do it. It is fit that he who appoints the work, should have the appointing of the workmen; and those may go on in their work with great satisfaction, who see their call to it clear.

12. And he stood before the altar of the LORD, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands, 13. (For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth

his hands toward heaven,) 14. And said, O LORD God of Israel, *there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth*; which keepest covenant, and *showest mercy* unto thy servants that walk before thee with all their hearts: 15. Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day. 16. Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me. 17. Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David. 18. (But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!) 19. Have respect, therefore, to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: 20. That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place. 21. Hearken, therefore, unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, *even from heaven*; and when thou hearest, forgive. 22. If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house; 23. Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness. 24. And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; 25. Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers. 26. When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them; 27. Then near

thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon the land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance. 28. If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness *there be*; 29. *Then* what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house; 30. Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men;) 31. That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. 32. Moreover, concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched-out arm; if they come and pray in this house; 33. Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as *doth* thy people Israel; and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name. 34. If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; 35. Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 36. If they sin against thee. (for *there is* no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; 37. Yet *if* they be-think themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; 38. If they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name; 39. Then hear

thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee. 40. Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and *let* thine ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place. 41. Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42. O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

Solomon had, in the foregoing verses, signed, and sealed, as it were, the deed of dedication, by which the temple was appropriated to the honour and service of God. Now here he prays the consecration-prayer, by which it was made a figure of Christ, the great Mediator, through whom we are to offer all our prayers, and to expect all God's favours, and to whom we are to have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God.

We opened the particulars of this prayer, 1 Kings 8. and therefore shall now only glean up some few passages in it which may be the proper subjects of our meditation.

I. Here are some doctrinal truths occasionally laid down. As, 1. That the God of Israel is a Being of incomparable perfection. We cannot describe him; but this we know, there is *none like him in heaven, or in earth*, v. 14. All the creatures have their fellow-creatures, but the Creator has not his peer. He is infinitely above all, and *over all*, *God blessed for ever*. 2. That he is, and will be, true to every word that he has spoken; and all that serve him in sincerity, shall certainly find him both faithful and kind. Those that set God always before them, and *walk before him with all their hearts*, shall find him as good as his word, and better; he will both keep covenant with them, and show mercy to them, v. 14. 3. That he is a Being infinite and immense, whom the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain, and to whose felicity nothing is added by the utmost we can do in his service, v. 18. He is infinitely beyond the bounds of the creation, and infinitely above the praises of all intelligent creatures. 4. That he, and *he only knows the hearts of the children of men*, v. 30. All men's thoughts, aims, and affections, are naked and open before him; and however the imaginations and intents of our hearts may be concealed from men, angels, and devils, they cannot be hid from God who knows not only what is in the heart, but the heart itself, and all the beatings of it. 5. That there is no such thing as a sinless perfection to be found in this life, v. 36. *There is no man which sinneth not*; nay, which *doeth good and sinneth not*; so he writes agreeable to what he here says, Eccl. 7. 20.

II. Here are some suppositions or cases put, which are to be taken notice of. 1. He supposes that if doubts and controversies arose between man and man, both sides would agree to appeal to God, and lay an oath upon the person whose testimony must decide the matter, v. 22. The religious reverence of an oath, as it was ancient, so, it may be presumed, it will continue as long as there are any remains of conscience and right reason among men. 2. He supposes that though Israel enjoyed a profound peace and tranquillity, troublesome times would come. He did not think the mountain of

their prosperity stood so strong, but that it might be moved; nay, he expected sin would move it. 3. He supposes that those who had not called upon God at other times, yet, in their affliction, would seek him early and earnestly. "When they are in distress, they will confess their sins, and confess thy name, and make supplication to thee." Trouble will drive those to God, who had said to him, Depart, v. 24, 26, 28. 4. He supposes that strangers would come from afar to worship the God of Israel, and to pay homage to him; and this also might reasonably be expected, considering what worthless things the gods of the nations were, and what proofs the God of Israel had given of his being Lord of the whole earth.

III. Here are petitions very pertinent.

1. That God would own this house, and have an eye to it, as the place of which he said that he would put his name there, v. 20. He could not, in faith, have asked God to show such peculiar favour to this house above any other, if he himself had not said that it should be his rest for ever. The prayer that will speed, must be warranted by the word. We may *therefore* with humble confidence pray to God to be well pleased with us in Jesus Christ, because he has declared himself well pleased in him; *This is my beloved Son*; but he says not now of any house, "This is my beloved place."

2. That God would hear and accept the prayers which should be made in, or toward, that place, v. 21. He asks not that God should help them, whether they prayed for themselves or no, but that God would help them, in answer to their prayers. Even Christ's intercessions do not supersede, but encourage, our supplications. He prays that God would hear from his dwelling-place, even from heaven; that is his dwelling-place still; not this temple; and thence help must come. *When thou hearest, forgive*. Note, The forgiveness of one sin, is that which makes way for all the other answers to our prayers, *Removendo prohibens—The evil which it drives away, it keeps away*.

3. That God would give judgment according to equity, upon all the appeals that should be made to him, v. 23, 30. This we may, in faith, pray for, we are sure it shall be done. God sitteth on the throne, judging right.

4. That God would return in mercy to his people, when they repented and reformed, and sought unto him, v. 25, 27, 38, 39. This we also may, in faith, pray for, building upon the repeated declarations God has made of his readiness to accept penitents.

5. That God would bid the strangers welcome to this house, and answer their prayers, v. 33. for if there be in duty, why should there not be in privilege one law for the stranger, and one born in the land, Lev. 24. 22.

6. That God would, upon all occasions, own and plead the cause of his people Israel, against all the opposers of it, v. 35, *maintain their cause*; and again, v. 39. If they be the Israel of God, their cause is the cause of God, and he will espouse it.

Lastly, He concludes this prayer with some expressions, which he had learned of his good Father, and borrowed from one of his psalms. We had them not in the Kings, but here we have them, v. 41, 42. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; and how can we express ourselves in better language to God, than that of his own Spirit? But these words were of use, in a special manner, to direct Solomon, because they had reference to this very work that he was now doing. We have them, Ps. 132. 8-10. He prays, (v. 41.) (1.) That God would take possession of the temple, and keep possession; that he would make it his resting-place. *Thou and the ark*; what will the ark do

without the God of the ark? Ordinances without the God of the ordinances? (2.) That he would make the ministers of the temple public blessings, *clothe them with salvation*, that is, not only save them, but make them instrumental to save others, by offering the sacrifices of righteousness. (3.) That the service of the temple might turn abundantly to the joy and satisfaction of all the Lord's people. *Let thy saints rejoice in goodness*, that is, in the *goodness of thy house*, Ps. 65. 4. Let all that come hither to worship, like the Eunuch, go away rejoicing. He pleads two things, v. 42. [1.] His own relation to God: "*Turn not away the face of thine anointed*. Lord, thou hast appointed me to be king, and wilt not thou own me?" [2.] God's covenant with his father: *Remember the mercies of David thy servant*. The piety of David toward God, so some understand it, so the word sometimes signifies, his pious care of the ark, and concern for it. See Ps. 132. 1, 2, &c. Or, the promises of God to David, which were mercies to him, his great support and comforts in all his troubles. We may plead, as Solomon does here, with an eye to Christ. We deserve that God should turn away our face, that he should reject us and our prayers; but we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, *thine anointed, thy Messiah*, so the word is; *thy Christ*, so the LXX. Him thou hearest always, and wilt never turn away his face. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, but, Lord, *remember the mercies of David thy servant*. Christ is God's servant, Isa. 42. 1. and is called *David*, Hos. 3. 5. Lord, remember his mercies, and accept of us on the account of them. Remember his tender concern for his Father's honour, and man's salvation, and what he did and suffered from that principle. Remember the promises of the everlasting covenant, which free grace has made to us in Christ, and which are called *the sure mercies of David*, Isa. 55. 3. and Acts 13. 34. This must be all our desire, and all our hope, all our prayer, and all our plea, for it is all our salvation.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have God's answer to Solomon's prayer. I. His public answer by fire from heaven, which consumed the sacrifices, v. 1. with which the priests and people were much affected, v. 2, 3. By that token of God's acceptance, they were encouraged to continue the solemnities of the feast for 14 days, and Solomon was encouraged to pursue all his designs for the honour of God, v. 4. 11. II. His private answer by word of mouth, in a dream or vision of the night, v. 12. 22. Most of these things we had before, 1 Kings 8. 9.

1. **N**OW when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is good*; for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 4. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and a hundred and

twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. 6. And the priests waited on their offices; the Levites also with instruments of music of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. 7. Moreover, Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the fat. 8. Also, at the same time, Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt. 9. And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days. 10. And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart, for the goodness that the LORD had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

Here is,

I. The gracious return which God immediately made to Solomon's prayer. The *fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice*, v. 1. In this way, God testifies his acceptance of Moses, Lev. 9. 24. of Gideon, Judg. 6. 21. of David, 1 Chron. 21. 26. of Elijah, 1 Kings 18. 39. and, in general, to accept the burnt-sacrifice, is, in the Hebrew phrase, to turn it to ashes, Ps. 20. 3. The fire came down here, not upon the killing of the sacrifices; but the praying of the prayer. This fire intimated that God was, 1. Glorious in himself; for *our God is a consuming fire*, terrible even in his holy places. This fire breaking forth (as is probable) out of the thick darkness, made it the more terrible, as on mount Sinai, Exod. 24. 16, 17. The sinners in Sion had reason to be afraid at this sight, and to say, *Who among us shall dwell near this devouring fire?* Isa. 33. 14. And yet, 2. Gracious to Israel; for this fire, which might justly have consumed them, fastened upon the sacrifice which was offered in their stead, and consumed that; by which God signified to them, that he accepted their offerings, and that his anger was turned away from them. Let us apply this, (1.) To the sufferings of Christ; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, in that he showed his good-will to men, having laid on him the iniquity of all. His death was our life, and he was made sin and a curse, that we might inherit righteousness and a blessing. That sacrifice was consumed, that we might escape: *Here am I, let these go away*. (2.) To the sanctification of the Spirit, who descends like fire, burning up

our lusts and corruptions, those beasts that must be sacrificed, or we are undone; and kindling in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections, always to be kept burning on the altar of the heart. The surest evidence of God's acceptance of our prayers, is the descent of this holy fire upon us; *Did not our hearts burn within us?* Luke 24. 32. As a further evidence that God accepted Solomon's prayer, still *the glory of the Lord filled the house*. The heart that is thus filled with a holy awe and reverence of the divine glory, in consequence of God's manifesting himself in his greatness, and (which is no less his glory) in his goodness, is thereby owned as a living temple.

II. The grateful return made to God for this gracious token of his favour.

1. The people *worshiped and praised God*, v. 3. When they saw the fire of God come down from heaven thus, they did not run away affrighted, but kept their ground in the courts of the Lord, and took occasion from it, (1.) With reverence to adore the glory of God; they *bowed their faces to the ground and worshipped*, thus expressing their awful dread of the Divine Majesty, their cheerful submission to the Divine Authority, and the sense they had of their own unworthiness to come into God's presence, and their inability to stand before the power of his wrath. (2.) With thankfulness to acknowledge the goodness of God; even then when the fire of the Lord came down, they praised him, saying, *He is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*. That is a song never out of season, and to which our hearts and tongues should be never out of tune. However it be, yet God is good. When he manifests himself as a consuming fire to sinners, his people can rejoice in him as their Light. Nay, they had reason to say that in this, God was good; *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, but the sacrifice in our stead, for which we are bound to be very thankful.

2. The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance, v. 4, 5. With these they feasted this holy fire, and bade it welcome to the altar. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased them. Note, The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in his service, and make us to abound therein more and more. The king's example stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on, when the leaders of a people lead it. The sacrifices were so numerous, that the altar could not contain them all: but rather than any of them should be turned back, (though we may suppose the blood of them all was sprinkled upon the altar,) the flesh of the burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, were burnt *in the midst of the court*, v. 7. which Solomon either hallowed for that service, or hallowed by it. In case of necessity, the pavement might be an altar.

3. The priests did their part, they waited on their offices; and the singers and musicians on their's, v. 6. with the instruments that David made, and the *hymn that David had put into their hand*, as some think it may be read, meaning that, 1 Chron. 16. 7. Or, as we read it, *when David praised by their ministry*. He employed, directed, and encouraged, them in this work of praising God; and therefore their performances were accepted as his act, and he is said *to praise by their ministry*.

4. The whole congregation expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction imaginable. They kept the feast of the dedication of the altar 7 days, from the 2d to the 9th; the 10th day was the day of atonement, when they were to afflict their souls for sin, and that was not unseasonable in the midst of their rejoicings; then on the 15th day, began the feast of tabernacles, which continued to the 22d, and they did not part till the 23d. We must never grudge

the time that we spend in the worship of God, and communion with him; nor think it long, or grow weary of it.

5. Solomon went on in his work, and prosperously effected all he designed, for the adorning both of God's house and his own, *v.* 11. Those that begin with the service of God, are likely to go on successfully in their own affairs. It was Solomon's praise, that what he undertook, he went through with, and it was by the grace of God that he prospered in it.

12. And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. 13. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place: 16. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. 17. And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; 18. Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man *to be* ruler in Israel. 19. But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them; 20. Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them: and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a by-word among all nations. 21. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? 22. And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

That God accepted Solomon's prayer, appeared by the fire from heaven. But a prayer may be accepted, and yet not answered in the letter of it; and therefore God appeared to him in the night, as he did once before, *ch.* I. 7. and after a day of sacrifice so, as then; and gave him a particular answer to

his prayer. We had the substance of it before, 1 Kings 9. 2.-9.

1. He promised to own this house for *a house of sacrifice to Israel, and a house of prayer for all people*, Isa. 56. 7. *v.* 12, 16, *My name shall be there for ever*, that is, "There will I make myself known, and there will I be called upon.

2. He promised to answer the prayers of his people, that should at any time be made in that place, *v.* 13.-15. (1.) National judgments are here supposed, *v.* 13. Famine and pestilence; by the locusts devouring the land, may be meant enemies as greedy as locusts, and laying all waste. (2.) National repentance, prayer, and reformation are required, *v.* 14. God expects that his people, who are called by his name, if they have dishonoured his name by their iniquity, should honour it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must humble themselves under his hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek the face and favour of God; and yet all this will not do, unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the God from whom they have revolted. (3.) National mercy is then promised; that God will forgive their sin, which brought the judgment upon them, and then heal their land, redress all their grievances. Pardoning mercy makes way for healing mercy, Ps. 103. 3. Matth. 9. 2.

3. He promised to perpetuate Solomon's kingdom, upon condition that he persevered in his duty, *v.* 17, 18. If he hoped for the benefit of God's covenant with David, he must imitate the example of David.

But he sets before him death as well as life, the curse as well as the blessing. (1.) He supposes it possible that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship other gods, *v.* 19. He knew their proneness to backslide into that sin. (2.) He threatens it as certain, that if they did so, it would certainly be the ruin of both church and state. [1.] It would be the ruin of their state, *v.* 20. "Though they have taken deep root, and taken root long, in this good land, yet I will pluck them up by the roots, extirpate the whole nation, pluck them up as men pluck up weeds out of their garden, which are thrown to the dunghill." [2.] It would be the ruin of their church. This sanctuary would be no sanctuary to them, to protect them from the judgments of God, as they imagined, saying, *The temple of the Lord are these*, Jer. 7. 4. "This house, which is high, not only for the magnificence of the structure, but for the designed ends and uses of it, shall be an astonishment, it shall come down wonderfully, (Lam. 1. 9.) to the amazement of all the neighbours."

CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter we are told, I. What cities Solomon built, *v.* 1.-6. II. What workmen Solomon employed, *v.* 7.-10. III. What care he took for a proper settlement for his wife, *v.* 11. IV. What a good method he put the temple-service into, *v.* 12.-16. V. What trading he had with foreign countries, *v.* 17, 18.

1. **A**ND it came to pass at the end of the twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house, 2. That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there. 3. And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. 4. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities which he built in Ha-

math. 5. Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars; 6. And Baalath, and all the store-cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot-cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion. 7. *As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which were not of Israel,* 8. *But of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day.* 9. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they *were* men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen. 10. And these *were* the chief of king Solomon's officers, *even* two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people. 11. And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places are holy* whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

This we had 1 Kings 9. 10-24. and therefore shall only observe here,

1. Though Solomon was a man of great learning and knowledge, yet he spent his days, not in contemplation, but in action, not in his study, but in his country, in building cities, and fortifying them. In a time of peace preparing for a time of war, which is as much a man's business, as it is in summer to provide food for winter.

2. As he was a man of business himself, and did not consult his own ease, so he employed a great many hands, kept abundance of people to work. It is the interest of a state by all means possible to promote and encourage industry, and to keep its subjects from idleness. A great many strangers there were in Israel, many that remained of the Canaanites; and they were welcome to live there, but not to live and do nothing. The men of Laish, who had no business, were an easy prey to the invaders, Judg. 18. 7.

3. When Solomon had begun with building the house of God, and made good work and quick work of that, he prospered in all his undertakings, so that *he built all that he desired to build*, v. 6. Those who have a genius for building, find that one object draws on another, and the latter must amend and improve the former. Now observe, (1.) How the Divine Providence gratified even Solomon's humour and gave him success, not only in all that he needed to build, and that was for his advantage to build, but in all that he had a mind to build. So indulgent a Father God is sometimes to the innocent desires of his children that serve him. Thus he pleased Jacob with that promise, *Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes*. (2.) Solomon knew how to set bounds to his desires. He was none of them that enlarge them endlessly, and can never be satisfied, but knew when to draw in; for he finished all he desired, and then he desired no more; he did

not sit down, and fret that he had not more cities to build, as Alexander did, that he had not more worlds to conquer, Heb. 2. 5.

4. That one reason why Solomon built a palace on purpose for the queen, and removed her and her court to it, was, because he thought it by no means proper that she should *dwell in the house of David*, v. 11. considering that that had been a place of great piety, and perhaps her house was a place of great vanity. She was proselyted, it is likely, to the Jewish religion; but it is a question whether all her servants were. Perhaps, they had among them the idols of Egypt, and a great deal of profaneness and debauchery. Now, though Solomon had not zeal and courage enough to suppress and punish what was amiss there, yet he so far consulted the honour of his father's memory, that he would not suffer that place to be thus profaned, where the ark of God had been, and where holy David had prayed many a good prayer, and sung many a sweet psalm. Not that all the places where the ark had been were so holy as never to be put to a common use; for then the houses of Abinadab and Obededom must have been so. But the place where it had been so long, and had been so publicly attended on, was so venerable, that it was not fit to be the place of so much gaiety, not to say iniquity, as was to be found, I fear, in the court that Pharaoh's daughter kept. Note, Between things sacred and things common, the ancient land-marks ought to be kept up. It was an outer court of the temple, that was the *court of the women*.

12. Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch, 13. Even after a certain rate every day offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, *even* in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. 14. And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required; the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. 15. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures. 16. Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished: *so* the house of the LORD was perfected. 17. Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom. 18. And Hiram sent him, by the hands of his servants, ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought *them* to king Solomon.

Here is,

1. Solomon's devotion. The building of the tem

ple was in order to the service of the temple; whatever cost he was at in rearing the structure, if he had neglected the worship that was to be performed there, it would all have been to no purpose. Assisting the devotion of others will not atone for our own neglects. When Solomon had built the temple,

(1.) He kept up the holy sacrifices there, according to the law of Moses, *v. 12, 13*. In vain had the altar been built, and in vain had fire come down from heaven, if sacrifices had not been constantly brought as the food of that altar, and the fuel of that fire. There were daily sacrifices, *a certain rate every day*, as duly as the day came; weekly sacrifices on the sabbath, double to what was offered on other days; monthly sacrifices, *on the new moons*; and yearly sacrifices, at the three solemn feasts. They are spiritual sacrifices that are now required of us, which we are to bring daily and weekly; and it is good to be in a settled method of devotion.

(2.) He kept up the holy songs there, according to the law of David, who is here called *the man of God*, as Moses was, because he was both instructed and authorised of God to make these establishments; and Solomon took care to see them observed, *as the duty of every day required, v. 14*. Solomon, though a wise and great man, and the builder of the temple, did not attempt to amend, alter, or add to, what the man of God had, in God's name, commanded, but closely adhered to that, and used his authority to have that duly observed; and then *none departed from the commandment of the king, concerning any matter, v. 15*. He observed God's laws, and then all obeyed his orders. When the service of the temple was put into this good order, then it is said, *The house of the Lord was perfected, v. 16*. The work was the main matter, not the place; the temple was unfinished till all this was done.

2. Solomon's merchandise. He did himself in person visit the sea-port towns of Eloth and Ezion-geber; for they that deal much in the world, will find it their interest, as far as they can, to inspect their affairs themselves, and to see with their own eyes, *v. 17*. Canaan was a rich country, and yet must send to Ophir for gold. The Israelites were a wise and understanding people, and yet must beholden to the king of Tyre for *men that had knowledge of the seas, v. 18*. and yet Canaan was God's peculiar land, and Israel God's peculiar people: which teaches us that grace, and not gold, is the best riches; and acquaintance with God and his law, not with arts and sciences, the best knowledge.

CHAP. IX.

Solomon here continues to appear great, both at home and abroad. We had this account of his grandeur, *1 Kings 10*. nothing is here added; but his defection, toward his latter end, which we have there, *ch. 11*. is here omitted; and the close of this chapter brings him to the grave with an unstained reputation. Perhaps none of the chapters of the Chronicles agree so much with a chapter in the Kings, as this does with *1 Kings 10*. verse for verse, only that the two first verses there are put into one here, and *v. 25*. here is taken from *1 Kings 4. 26*. and the three last verses here from *1 Kings 11. 41. 43*. Here is, I. The honour which the queen of Sheba did to Solomon, in the visit she made him to hear his wisdom, *v. 1. 12*. II. Many instances given of the riches and splendour of Solomon's court, *v. 13. 28*. III. The conclusion of his reign, *v. 29. 31*.

1. **AND** when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abun-

dance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 2. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. 3. And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, 4. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cup-bearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. 5. And she said to the king, *It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom*; 6. Howbeit, I believed not their words until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*; and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: *for thou exceedest the fame that I heard*. 7. Happy *are* thy men, and happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. 8. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, *to be king for the LORD thy God*: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice. 9. And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon. 10. And the servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophir, brought algum-trees and precious stones. 11. And the king made of the algum-trees terraces to the house of the LORD, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for singers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah. 12. And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides *that* which she had brought unto the king: so she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

This passage of story has been largely considered in the Kings; yet because our Saviour has proposed it as an example to us in our inquiries after him, *Matth. 12. 42*. we must not pass it over, without observing briefly,

1. *Those who honour God, he will honour*, *1 Sam. 2. 30*. Solomon had greatly honoured God, in building, beautifying, and dedicating, the temple: all his wisdom, and all his wealth, were employed for the making of that a consummate piece: and now God made his wisdom and wealth to redound greatly to his reputation. The way to have both the credit and comfort of all our endowments, and all our enjoyments, is, to consecrate them to God, and use them for him.

2. Those who know the worth of true wisdom, will grudge no pains or cost to compass it. The queen of Sheba put herself to a great deal of trouble and expense, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and yet, learning from him to serve God, and do her duty, she thought herself well paid for her pains. Heavenly wisdom is that *pearl of great price*, for the purchase of which, if we part with all, we make a good bargain.

3. As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same for the edification of others, as he has opportunity. Solomon was communicative of his wisdom, and willing to teach others what he knew himself. Being taught of God, freely he had received, and freely he gave. Let them that are rich in wisdom, as well as wealth, learn to *do good*, and *be ready to distribute. Give to every one that asketh.*

4. Good order in a family, a great family, especially in the things of God, and a regular discharge of the duties of religious worship, are highly expedient, and to be much admired wherever found. The queen of Sheba was exceedingly affected to see the propriety with which Solomon's servants attended him, and with which both he and they attended in the house of God. David's ascent to the house of the Lord was also pleasant and interesting, Ps. 42. 4.

5. Those are happy, who have the opportunity of a constant converse with such as are knowing, wise and good. The queen of Sheba thought Solomon's servants happy, who continually *heard his wisdom*; for, it seems, even to them he was communicative. And it is observable, that the posterity of those who had places in his court, were willing to have the names of their ancestors forgotten, and thought themselves sufficiently distinguished and dignified, when they were called the *children of Solomon's servants*, Ezra 2. 55. Neh. 7. 57. so eminent were they, it was honour enough to be named from them.

6. We ought to rejoice, and give God thanks, for the gifts, graces, and usefulness, of others. The queen of Sheba blessed God for the honour he put upon Solomon, and the favour he did to Solomon, in advancing him to the throne, v. 8. By giving God the praise of the prosperity of others, we share in the comfort of it; whereas, by envying the prosperity of others, we lose the comfort even of our own. The happiness both of king and kingdom, she traces up to the fountain of all bliss, the divine favour: it was because *thy God delighted in thee*, and because he *loved Israël*. Those mercies are doubly sweet, which we can taste the kindness and good will of God in, as our God.

7. It becomes those that are wise and good, to be generous according to their place and power. The queen of Sheba was so to Solomon, Solomon was so to her, v. 9, 12. They both knew how to value wisdom, and therefore were neither of them covetous of their money, but cultivated the acquaintance, and confirmed the friendship, they had contracted, by mutual presents. Our Lord Jesus has promised to give us all our desire: *Ask, and it shall be given you*. Let us study what we shall render to him, and not think any thing too much to do, or suffer, or part with, for him.

13. Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; 14. Beside *that which* chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. 15. And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold:

six hundred *shekels* of beaten gold went to one target. 16. And three hundred shields *made he* of beaten gold; three hundred *shekels* of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. 17. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18. And *there were* six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, *which were* fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting-place, and two lions standing by the stays: 19. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom. 20. And all the drinking-vessels of king Solomon *were of* gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold: none *were of* silver; it was *not* any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. 21. For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. 22. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. 23. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. 24. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 25. And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. 26. And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. 27. And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that *are* in the low plains in abundance. 28. And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands. 29. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat? 30. And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. 31. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

We have here Solomon in his throne, and Solomon in his grave; for the throne would not secure him from the grave. *Mors sceptris ligonibus æquat—Death wrenches from the hand the sceptre as well as the shade.*

I. Here is Solomon reigning in wealth and power

in ease and fulness, such as, for aught I know, could never since be paralleled by any king whatsoever. I cannot pretend to be critical in comparing the grandeur of Solomon with that of some of the great princes of the earth; but the most illustrious of them were famed for their wars, whereas Solomon reigned 40 years in profound peace. Some of those that might be thought to vie with Solomon, affected retirement, kept people in awe by keeping them at a distance; nobody must see them, or come near them, upon pain of death. But Solomon went much abroad, and appeared in public business; so that all things considered, the promise was fulfilled, that God would give him riches and wealth, and honour, such as no kings *have had, or shall have*, ch. 1. 12.

1. Never any prince appeared in public with greater splendor than Solomon did, which to those that judge by the sight of the eye, as most people do, would very much recommend him. He had 200 targets, and 500 shields, all of beaten gold, carried before him, v. 15, 16. and sat upon a most stately throne, v. 17-19. *There was not the like in any kingdom.* The lustre wherein he appeared, was typical of the spiritual glory of the kingdom of the Messiah, and but a faint representation of his throne, which is above every throne. Solomon's pomp was all artificial; and therefore our Saviour prefers the natural beauty of the *lilies of the field* before it: Matth. 6. 29, *Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

2. Never any prince had greater plenty of gold and silver, though there were no gold or silver mines in his own kingdom. Either, he made himself master of the mines in other countries, and having a populous country, sent hands to dig out those rich metals; or, having a fruitful country, he exported the commodities of it, and with them fetched home all this gold that is here spoken of, v. 13, 14-21.

3. Never any prince had such presents brought him by all his neighbours as Solomon had: *All the kings of Arabia, and governors of the country, brought him gold and silver*, v. 14. Not as tribute which he extorted from them, but as free-will offerings to procure his favours, or in a way of exchange for some of the productions of his husbandry, corn, or cattle. All the kings of the earth brought him presents, that is, all in those parts of the world, v. 24, 28. because they coveted his acquaintance and friendship. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom, as soon as he was born, the wise men of the east brought presents, *gold, frankincense, and myrrh*, Matth. 2. 11. and to whom all that are about him, must bring presents, Ps. 76. 11. Rom. 12. 1.

4. Never any prince was so renowned for wisdom, so courted, so consulted, so admired, v. 23. *The kings of the earth* (for it was too great a favour for common persons to pretend to) *sought to hear his wisdom.* Either his natural philosophy, or his skill in physic, or his state policy, or his rules of prudence for the conduct of human life, or perhaps the principles of his religion, and the reasons of it. The application which they then made to Solomon to hear his wisdom, will aggravate, shame, and condemn, men's general contempt of Christ, and his gospel. Though in them are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, yet none of the *princes of this world* desire to know them, for they are foolishness to them, 1 Cor. 2. 8, 14.

II. Here is Solomon dying; stripped of his pomp, and leaving all his wealth and power, not to one concerning whom he knew not *whether he would be a wise man or a fool*, Eccl. 2. 19. but who, he knew, would be a fool. This was not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, v. 29-31.

It is very observable, that no mention is here made of Solomon's departure from God in the latter days, nor the least hint given of it. 1. Because the Holy Ghost would teach us not to take delight in repeating the faults and follies of others. If those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour, misbehave, though it may be of use to take notice of their misconduct, for warning to ourselves and others, yet we must not be forward to mention it, once speaking of it is enough; why should that unpleasing string be again struck upon? Why can we not do as the sacred historian here does, speak largely of that in others, which is praise-worthy, without saying any thing of their blemishes, yea, though they have been gross and obvious. This is but doing as we would be done by. 2. Because, though he fell, yet he was not utterly cast down. *Therefore* his sin is not again recorded, because it was repented of, and pardoned, and so became as if it had never been. Scripture-silence sometimes speaks. I am willing to believe that its silence here, concerning the sin of Solomon, is an intimation that none of the sins he committed, were mentioned against him, Ezek. 33. 16. When God pardons sin, *he casts it behind his back, and remembers it no more.*

CHAP. X.

This chapter is copied almost *verbatim* from 1 Kings 12. 1-19. where it was opened at large. Solomon's defection from God was not repeated, but the defection of the ten tribes from his family is, in this chapter; where we find, I. How foolish Rehoboam was, in his treating with them, v. 1, 5-14. II. How wicked the people were, in complaining of Solomon, v. 2-4. and forsaking Rehoboam, v. 16-19. III. How just and righteous God was in all this, v. 15. his counsel was thereby fulfilled. With him are strength and wisdom, both *the deceived and the deceiver* (the fool and the knave) *are his*, Job 12. 16. that is, are made use of by him, to serve his purposes.

1. **A**ND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king. 2. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, (who was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king,) heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. 3. And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came, and spake to Rehoboam, saying, 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous; now, therefore, ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee. 5. And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed. 6. And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye *me*, to return answer to this people? 7. And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever. 8. But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him. 9. And he said unto them, What advice give ye, that we may

return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? 10. And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

We may observe here,

1. The wisest and best cannot give every body content. Solomon enriched and advanced his kingdom, did all (one would think) that could be done to make them happy and easy; and yet either he was indiscreet in burthening them with the imposition of taxes and services, or, at least, there was some colour of reason to think him so. No man is perfectly wise. It is probable that it was when Solomon had declined from God and his duty, that his wisdom failed him, and God left him to himself to act thus inpolitely. Even Solomon's treasures were exhausted by his love of women; and, probably, it was to maintain them, and their pride, luxury, and idolatry, that he squeezed his subjects.

2. Turbulent and ungrateful spirits will find fault with the government, and complain of grievances, when they have very little reason to do so. Had they not peace in Solomon's time? Never plundered by invaders, as formerly, never put to fear by the alarms of war, nor obliged to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. Had they not plenty? Meat enough, and money enough? What would they more? *O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint!—O happy, if they knew their happy state!* And yet they complain that Solomon made their yoke grievous. If any complain thus of the yoke of Christ, that they may have a pretence to break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, we are sure that he never gave them any cause at all for the complaint, whatever Solomon did. His yoke was easy, and his burthen light. *He never made us serve with an offering, nor wearied us with incense.*

3. Many ruin themselves, and their interests, by trampling and provoking their inferiors. Rehoboam thought that because he was king, he might rule it as his father had done, have what he would, and do what he would, and carry all before him. But though he wore his father's crown, he wanted his father's head-piece, and ought to have considered, that, being quite a different man from what his father was, he ought to take other measures: such a wise man as Solomon, may do as he will, but such a fool as Rehoboam, must do as he can. The high-mettled horse may be kicked and spurred by him that has the art of managing him; but if an unskilful horseman do it, it is at his peril. Rehoboam paid dear for his threatening, and talking big, and thinking to carry it with a high hand. It was Job's wisdom, as well as his virtue, that he *despised not the cause of his man-servant or maid-servant*, when they argued with him, Job 31. 13. but heard them patiently, considered their reasons, and gave them a soft answer. And the like tender consideration of those in subjection, and a forwardness to make them easy, will be the comfort and praise of all in

authority, in the church, in the state, and in families.

4. Moderate counsels are generally wisest and best. Gentleness will do what violence will not do. Most people love to be accosted mildly. Rehoboam's old experienced counsellors directed him to this method, *v. 7, Be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them*, and thou art sure of them for ever. Good words cost nothing but a little self-denial, and yet they purchase great things.

5. God often fulfils the counsels of his own wisdom, by infatuating men, and giving them up to the counsels of their own folly. No more needs be done to ruin men, than to leave them to themselves, and their own pride and passion.

12. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day. 13. And the king answered them roughly: and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, 14. And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions. 15. So the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 16. And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse*: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and now*, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents. 17. But *as for* the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18. Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram, that *was* over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones that he died: but king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to *his* chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19. And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

We may learn here,

1. That when public affairs are in a ferment, violent proceedings do but make bad worse. Rough answers (such as Rehoboam here gave) do but stir up anger, and bring oil to the flames. The pilot has need to steer steady in a storm. Many have been driven to the mischief they did not intend, by being too severely dealt with, for what they did intend.

2. That whatever the devices and designs of men are, God is, by all, doing his own work, and fulfilling the word which he has spoken, no iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground. The cause of the king's obstinacy and want of thought was *of God*, that he *might perform the word which he spake by Ahijah, v. 15.* This does not at all excuse Rehoboam's folly, nor lessen the guilt of his haughtiness

and passion, that God was pleased to serve his own ends by it.

5. That worldly wealth, honour, and dominion, are very uncertain things. *Solomon reigned over all Israel*, and, one would think, had done enough to secure the monarchy entire to his family for many ages; and yet he is scarcely cold in his grave, before 10 of the 12 tribes finally revolt from his son. All the good services he had done for Israel, are now forgotten. *What portion have we in David?* Thus is the government of Christ cast off by many, notwithstanding all he has done to oblige the children of men for ever to himself; they say, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. But this rebellion will certainly be their ruin.

4. That God often visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Solomon forsakes God, and therefore not he, but his son after him, is forsaken by the greatest part of his people. Thus God, by making the penal consequence of sin to last long, and visibly to continue after the sinner's death, would give an indication of its malignity, and perhaps some intimation of the perpetuity of its punishment. He that sins against God, not only wrongs his soul, but perhaps wrongs his seed more than he thinks of.

5. That when God is fulfilling his threatenings, he will take care that, at the same time, promises do not fall to the ground. When Solomon's iniquity is remembered, and for it his son loses ten tribes, David's piety is not forgotten, nor the promise made to him; but for the sake of that, his grandson had two tribes preserved to him. The failings of the saints shall not frustrate any promise made to Christ their Head. They shall be chastised, but the covenant not broken, Ps. 89. 31-34.

CHAP. XI.

We are here going on with the history of Rehoboam. I.

His attempt to recover the ten tribes he had lost, and the letting fall of that attempt, in obedience to the divine command, v. 1. 4. II. His successful endeavours to preserve the two tribes that remained, v. 5. 12. III. The resort of the priests and Levites to him, v. 13. 17. IV. An account of his wives and children, v. 18. 22.

1. **AND** when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen *men*, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. 2. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3. Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4. Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house; for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam. 5. And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah. 6. He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, 7. And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam, 8. And Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, 9. And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, 10. And Zorah, and Ajalon, and Hebron, which *are* in Judah and in Benjamin, fenced

cities. 11. And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. 12. And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

How the ten tribes deserted the house of David, we read in the foregoing chapter. They had formerly sat loose to that family, 2 Sam. 20. 1, 2. and now they quite threw it off; not considering how much it would weaken the common interest, and take Israel down from that pitch of glory at which it had arrived in the last reign. But thus the *kingdom* must be corrected as well as the *house* of David.

1. Rehoboam, at length, like a bold man, raises an army, with a design to reduce the revolters, v. 1. Judah and Benjamin were not only resolved to continue their allegiance to him, but ready to give him the best assistance they could, for the recovery of his right. Judah was his own tribe, that owned him some years before the rest did; Benjamin was the tribe in which Jerusalem, or the greatest part of it stood; which perhaps was one reason why that tribe clave to him.

2. Yet like a conscientious man, when God forbade him to prosecute this design, in obedience to him, he let it fall; either because he revered the divine authority, or because he knew that he should not prosper if he should go contrary to God's command, but instead of retrieving what was lost, would be in danger of losing what he had. It is dangerous undertaking any thing, but especially undertaking a war, contrary to the will of God. God calls him, v. 3, *Rehoboam the son of Solomon*, to intimate that this was determined for the sin of Solomon, and it would be to no purpose to oppose a decree that was gone forth. They *obeyed the words of the Lord*; and though it looked mean, and would turn to their reproach among their neighbours; yet because God would have it so, they laid down their arms.

3. Like a discreet man, he fortified his own country. He saw it was to no purpose to think of reducing those that were revolted. A few good words might have prevented their defection, but now all the force of his kingdom cannot bring them back; the thing is done, and so it must rest; it is his wisdom to make the best of it. Perhaps the same young counsellors that had advised him to answer them roughly, urged him to fight them, notwithstanding the divine inhibitions; but he had paid dear enough for being advised by them, and therefore now, we may suppose, his aged and experienced counsellors were hearkened to, and they advised him not only to submit to the will of God concerning what was lost, but to make it his business to keep what he had. It was, probably, by their advice that, (1.) He fortified his frontiers, and many of the principal cities of his kingdom, which, in Solomon's peaceable reign, no care had been taken for the defence of. (2.) He furnished them with good store of victuals and arms, v. 11, 12. Because God forbade him to fight, he did not therefore sit down sullen, and say that he would do nothing for the public safety, if he might not do that, but prudently provided against an attack. They that may not be conquerors, yet may be builders.

13. And the priests and the Levites that *were* in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. 14. (For the Levites left their suburbs, and their possession, and came to

Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: 15. And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.) 16. And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. 17. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. 18. And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse; 19. Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zerah. 20. And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom, which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21. And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.) 22. And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, *to be ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king.* 23. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city; and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

See here,

1. How Rehoboam was strengthened by the accession of the priests and Levites, and all the devout and pious Israelites, to him; even all that were true to their God, and their religion.

1. Jeroboam cast them off; that is, he set up such a way of worship as he knew they could not, in conscience, comply with, which obliged them to withdraw from his altar, and at the same time he would not allow them to go up to Jerusalem, to worship at the altar there; so that he totally *cast them off from executing the priest's office*, v. 14. And very willing he was that they should turn themselves out of their places, that room might be made for those mean and scandalous persons whom he *ordained priests for the high places*, v. 15. Compare 1 Kings 12. 31. No marvel if he that cast off God, cast off his ministers; they were not for his purpose, would not do whatever he bid them do, would not *serve his gods, nor worship the golden image which he had set up*.

2. They, thereupon, *left their suburbs and possessions*, v. 14. Out of the lot of each tribe, the Levites had cities allowed them, where they were comfortably provided for, and had opportunity of doing much good. But now they were driven out of all their cities, except those in Judah and Benjamin. One would think their maintenance well settled, and yet they lost it. It was a comfort to them, that the law so often reminded them that the *LORD was their inheritance*, and therefore that they should

find him, when they were turned out of their house and possessions. But why did they leave their possession? (1.) Because they saw they could do no good among their neighbours, in whom, (now that Jeroboam set up his calves,) the old proneness to idolatry revived. (2.) Because they themselves would be in a continual temptation, to some base compliances, and in danger of being drawn insensibly to that which was evil. If we pray, in sincerity, not to be led into temptation, we shall get and keep as far as we can out of the way of it. (3.) Because if they retained their integrity, they had reason to expect persecution from Jeroboam and his sons. The priests they made for the devils, would not let the Lord's priests be long among them. No secular advantages whatsoever should draw us thither, or detain us there, where we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

3. *They came to Judah and Jerusalem*, v. 14. and *presented themselves to Rehoboam*, v. 13. margin. Where should God's priests and Levites be, but where his altar was? Thither they came, because it was their business to attend at the times appointed. (1.) It was a mercy to them, that they had a place of refuge to flee to; and that when Jeroboam cast them off, there were those so near, that would entertain them, and bid them welcome, and they were not forced into the lands of the Heathen. (2.) It was an evidence that they loved their work better than their maintenance, in that they *left their suburbs and possessions in the country*, (where they might have lived at ease upon their own,) because they were restrained from serving God there, and cast themselves upon God's providence, and the charity of their brethren, in coming to a place where they might have the free enjoyment of God's ordinances, according to his institution. Poverty in the way of duty, is to be chosen rather than plenty in the way of sin. Better live upon alms, or die in a prison, with a good conscience, than roll in wealth and pleasure with a prostituted one. (3.) It was the wisdom and praise of Rehoboam and his people, that they bid them welcome, though they crowded themselves, perhaps, to make room for them. Conscientious refugees will bring a blessing along with them to the countries that entertain them, as they leave a curse behind them with those that expel them. *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth truth, may enter in; it will be good policy.* See Isa. 26. 1, 2.

4. When the priests and Levites came to Jerusalem, all the devout pious Israelites of every tribe followed them. Such as *set their heart, to seek the LORD God of Israel*, that made conscience of their duty to God, and were sincere and resolute in it, they left the inheritance of their fathers, and went and took houses in Jerusalem, that they might have free access to the altar of God, and be out of the temptation to worship the calves, v. 16. Note, (1.) That is best for us, which is best for our souls; and in all our choices, advantages for religion must take place of all outward conveniences. (2.) Where God's faithful priests are, his faithful people should be. If Jeroboam cast off God's ministers, every true-born Israelite will think himself obliged to own them, and stand by them. *Forsake not the Levite, the outcast Levite, as long as thou livest. When the ark removes, remove ye, and go after it,* Josh. 3. 3.

5. *They strengthened the kingdom of Judah*, v. 17. not only by the addition of so many persons to it, who, it is likely, brought what they could of their effects with them, but by their piety and their prayers they procured a blessing upon the kingdom, which was a sanctuary to them. See Zech. 12. 3. It is the interest of a nation to protect and encourage religion and religious people, and adds more than

any thing to its strength. They made him and his people *strong, three years*: for so long they *walked in the way of David and Solomon, their good way*; but when they forsook that, and so threw themselves out of God's favour and protection, the best friends they had, could no longer help to strengthen them. We retain our strength while we cleave to God and our duty, and no longer.

II. How Rehoboam was weakened by indulging himself in his pleasures. He *desired many wives*, as his father did, *v. 23*, yet, *1*. In *this*, he was more wise than his father, that he does not appear to have married strange wives. The wives mentioned here were not only daughters of Israel, but of the family of David; one was a descendant from Eliab, David's brother, *v. 18*. another from Absalom, probably David's son, *v. 20*. another from Jerimoth, David's son. *2*. In *this*, he was more happy than his father, that he had many sons and daughters; whereas we read not of more than one son that his father had. One can scarcely imagine that he had no more; but if he had, they were not worth mentioning; whereas several of Rehoboam's sons are here named, *v. 19, 20*. as men of note, and such active men, that he thought it his wisdom to *disperse them throughout the countries of Judah and Benjamin*, *v. 23*, either, (1.) That they might not be rivals with his son Abijah, whom he designed for his successor; or, rather, (2.) Because he could repose a confidence in them, for the preserving of the public peace and safety, could trust them with fenced cities, which he took care to have well-vic-tualled, that they might stand him in stead, in case of an invasion. Thus he that acted foolishly at first, dealt wisely afterward. After-wisdom is better than none at all; nay, they say, "Wit is never good till it is bought;" though his was dear bought with the loss of a kingdom.

CHAP. XII.

This chapter gives us a more full account of the reign of Rehoboam than we had before in Kings, and it is a very melancholy account. Methinks we are in the book of Judges again; for, I. Rehoboam and his people did evil in the sight of the Lord, *v. 1*. II. God, thereupon, sold them into the hands of Shishakking of Egypt, who greatly oppressed them, *v. 2, 4*. III. God sent a prophet to them to expound to them the judgment, and to call them to repentance, *v. 5*. IV. They, thereupon, humbled themselves, *v. 6*. V. God, upon their repentance, turned from his anger, *v. 7, 12*, and yet left them under the marks of his displeasure, *v. 8, 11*. Lastly, Here is a general character of Rehoboam and his reign, and the conclusion of it, *v. 13, 16*.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. 2. And it came to pass, *that*, in the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD. 3. With twelve hundred chariots, and three-score thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. 4. And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. 5. Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have

forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. 6. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, the LORD is righteous. 7. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, *therefore* I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. 9. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 10. Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. 11. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard-chamber. 12. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

Israel was very much disgraced and weakened by being divided into two kingdoms; yet the kingdom of Judah, having both the temple and the royal city, both the house of David and the house of Aaron, might have done very well if they had continued in the way of their duty; but here we have all out of order there.

I. Rehoboam and his people left God. He *forsook the law of the Lord*, and so, in effect, forsook God, and *all Israel with him*, *v. 1*. He had his happy triennium, when he walked in the way of David and Solomon, *ch. 11. 7*. but it expired, and he grew remiss in the worship of God; in what instances, we are not told, but he fell off, and Judah with him, here called *Israel*, because they walked in the evil ways which Jeroboam had drawn the kingdom of Israel into. *This he did, when he had established the kingdom, and strengthened himself*. As long as he thought his throne tottered, he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but when he found it stood firm, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it. *Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.* When men prosper, and are in no apprehension of troubles, they are ready to say to God, *Depart from us*.

II. God quickly brought troubles upon them, to awaken them, and recover them to repentance, before their hearts were hardened. It was but in the 4th year of Rehoboam, that they began to corrupt themselves, and in the 5th year, the king of Egypt came up against them with a vast army, took the fenced cities of Judah, and came against Jerusalem, *v. 2, 3, 4*. This great calamity came upon them so soon after they began to desert the worship of God, by a hand they had little reason to suspect, (having

had a great deal of friendly correspondence with Egypt in the last reign,) and came with so much violence, (all the fenced cities of Judah, which Rehoboam had lately fortified and garrisoned, and on which he relied much for the safety of his kingdom, falling rapidly into the hands of the enemy, without making any resistance,) that the whole was, obviously, of the Lord, because they had transgressed against him.

III. Lest they should not readily, or not rightly, understand the meaning of this providence, God, by the word, explains the scourge, *v. 5*. When the princes of Judah were all met at Jerusalem, probably, in a great council of war, to concert measures for their own safety in this critical juncture, he sent a prophet to them, the same that had brought them an injunction from God not to fight against the ten tribes, (*ch. 11. 2*.) Shemaiah by name; he told them plainly that the reason why Shishak prevailed against them was, not because they had been impotent in the management of their affairs, (which perhaps the princes in this congress were, at this time, scrutinizing,) but because they had forsaken God. God never leaves any, till they first leave him.

IV. The rebukes both of the word and of the rod being thus joined, the king and princes humbled themselves before God for their iniquity, penitently acknowledged the sin, and patiently accepted the punishment of it, saying *The Lord is righteous, v. 6*. "We have none to blame but ourselves; let God be clear when he judgeth." Thus it becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of Providence, to justify God, and judge ourselves; even kings and princes must either bend, or break, before God; either be humbled or be ruined.

V. Upon the profession they made of repentance, God showed them some favour, saved them from ruin, and yet left them under some remaining fears of the judgment, to prevent their revolt again.

1. God, in mercy, prevented the destruction they were now upon the brink of. Such a vast, and now victorious army, as Shishak had, having made themselves masters of all the fenced cities, what other could be expected, than that the whole country, and even Jerusalem itself, would, in a little time, be their's? But when God saith, *Here shall the proud waves be stayed*; the most threatening force strangely dwindles, and becomes impotent. Here again, the destroying angel, when he comes to Jerusalem, is forbidden to destroy that: *My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem*; not at this time, not by this hand, not utterly to destroy it, *v. 7. 12*. Note, Those that acknowledge God righteous in afflicting them, shall find him gracious. They that humble themselves before him, shall find favour with him. So ready is the God of mercy to take the first occasion to show mercy. If we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and it shall either be removed, or the property of it altered.

2. He granted them some deliverance, not complete, but in part; he gave them some advantages against the enemy, so that they recruited a little; he gave them deliverance for a little while, so some. They reformed but partially, and for a little while, soon relapsing again; and as their reformation was, so was their deliverance. Yet it is said, *v. 12, in Judah things went well*, and began to look with a better face. (1.) In respect of piety; *there were good things in Judah*, so it is in the margin; good ministers, good people, good families, who were made better by the calamities of their country. Note, In times of great corruption and degeneracy, it is some comfort if there be a remnant, among whom good things are found; this is a ground of hope in Israel. (2.) In respect of prosperity. In Judah things went ill, when all the fenced cities

were taken, *v. 4*. but when they repented, the posture of their affairs altered, and things went well. Note, If things do not go so well as we could wish, yet we have reason to take notice of it with thankfulness, if they go better than was to have been expected, better than formerly, and better than we deserved; and we should own God's goodness, if he do but grant us some deliverance.

3. Yet he left them to smart sorely by the hand of Shishak, both in their liberty and their wealth.

(1.) In their liberty; *v. 8, They shall be his servants*, that is, they shall be much at his mercy, and be put under contribution by him, and some of them, perhaps, be taken prisoners, and held in captivity by him, *that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries*. They complained, it may be, of the strictness of their religion, and therefore *forsook the law of the Lord, (v. 1.)* because they thought it a yoke too hard, too heavy, upon them. "Well," saith God, "let them mend their service if they can; let the neighbouring princes rule them a while, since they are not willing that I should rule them. and let them try how they like that; they might have served God with *joyfulness and gladness of heart*, and would not; let them serve their enemies then in *hunger and thirst*, Deut. 28. 47, 48. till they think of returning to their first master, for then it was better with them," Hos. 2. 7. This, some think, is the meaning of that, Ezek. 20. 24, 25, *Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good*. Note, [1.] The more God's service is compared with other services, the more reasonable and easy it will appear. [2.] Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine there are in the way of obedience, it is better, a thousand times, to go through them, than to expose ourselves to the punishment of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. The service of virtue is perfect liberty; the service of lust is perfect slavery.

(2.) In their wealth. The king of Egypt plundered both the temple and the exchequer, the treasures of both which, Solomon left very full; but he *took them away*; yea he *took all*, all he could lay his hands on, *v. 9*. This was what he came for. David and Solomon, who walked in the way of God, filled the treasures, one by war, and the other by merchandise; but Rehoboam, who forsook the law of God, emptied them. The taking away of the golden shields, and the substituting of brazen ones in their place, *v. 9-11*. we had an account of before, 1 Kings 14. 25-28.

13. So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. 14. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. 15. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer, concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 16. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

The story of Rehoboam's reign is here concluded; much as the story of the other reign concludes.

Two things especially are observable here,

1. That he was, at length, well *fixed in his kingdom*, v. 13. His fenced cities in Judah did not answer his expectation, so he now *strengthened himself in Jerusalem*, and made it his business to fortify that; and there he reigned 17 years *in the city which the Lord had chosen to put his name there*. This intimates his honour and privilege, that he had his royal seat in the holy city, which yet was but an aggravation of his impiety; near the temple, but far from God. Frequent skirmishes there were between his subjects and Jeroboam's, such as amounted to *continual wars*, v. 15. but he held his own, and reigned, and, as it should seem, did not so grossly *forsake the law of God* as he had done, v. 1. in his 4th year.

2. That he was never rightly fixed in his religion, v. 14. he never quite cast off God; and yet, in this, he did evil, that he *prepared not his heart to seek the Lord*. See what the fault is laid upon. (1.) He did not serve the Lord, because he did not seek the Lord. He did not pray, as Solomon did, for wisdom and grace. If we prayed better, we should be every way better. Or, he did not consult the word of God, did not seek to that as his oracle, nor take directions from that. (2.) He made nothing of his religion, because he did not set his heart to it; never minded it with any closeness of application, had never any hearty disposition to it, nor ever came up to a steady resolution in it. What little goodness he had, passed away like the morning cloud. And *therefore* he did evil, because he was never determined for that which is good. Those are easily drawn by Satan to an evil, who are wavering and inconstant in that which is good, and are never persuaded to make religion their business.

CHAP. XIII.

We have here a much fuller account of the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, than we had in the Kings. There we found that his character was no better than his father's; he *walked in the sins of his father, and his heart was not right with God*, 1 Kings 15. 2, 3. But here we find him more brave and successful in war, than his father was. He reigned but three years, and was chiefly famous for a glorious victory he obtained over the forces of Jeroboam. Here is, I. The armies brought into the field on both sides, v. 3. The remonstrance which Abijah made before the battle, setting forth the justice of his cause, v. 4. . 12. III. The distress which Judah was brought into by the policy of Jeroboam, v. 13, 14. IV. The victory they obtained, notwithstanding, by the power of God, v. 15. . 20. V. The conclusion of Abijah's reign, v. 21, 22.

1. **N**OW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. 2. He reigned three years in Jerusalem: (his mother's name also was Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah:) and there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3. And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, *even* four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, *being* mighty men of valour. 4. And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; 5. Ought you not to know, that the LORD God

of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? 6. Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. 7. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them. 8. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and *there are* with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. 9. Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of *other* lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, *the same* may be a priest of *them that are* no gods. 10. But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the LORD, *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *wait upon* their business: 11. And they burn unto the LORD, every morning and every evening, burnt-sacrifices and sweet incense: the show-bread also *set they in order* upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him. 12. And, behold, God himself *is* with us for *our* captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper.

Abijah's mother was called *Maachah*, the daughter of Absalom, *ch.* 11. 20; here she is called *Michaiah*, the daughter of Uriel. It is most probable that she was a grand-daughter of Absalom, by his daughter Tamar, 2 Sam. 14. 27. and that her immediate father was this Uriel. But we are here to attend Abijah into the field of battle, with Jeroboam king of Israel.

I. God gave him leave to engage with Jeroboam, and owned him in it, though he would not permit Rehoboam to do it, *ch.* 11. 4. 1. Jeroboam, it is probable, was now the aggressor, and what Abijah did, was in his own necessary defence. Jeroboam, it may be, happening to survive Rehoboam, claimed the crown of Judah by survivorship, at least, hoped to get it from this young king, upon his accession to the throne. Against these imprudent pretensions, it was brave in Abijah to take up arms, and God stood by him. 2. When Rehoboam attempted to recover his 10 tribes, Jeroboam was upon his good behaviour, and there must be some trial of him; but now that he had discovered what manner of man he was, by setting up the calves, and casting off the priests, Abijah is allowed to chastise him; and it does not appear that he intended any more; whereas

Rehoboam aimed at no less than the utter reduction of the 10 tribes, which was contrary to the counsel of God.

II. Jeroboam's army was double in number to that of Abijah, *v.* 3. for he had ten tribes to raise an army out of, Abijah had but two. Yet the inferior number proves victorious; for the battle is not always to the strong, nor the cause to the majority.

III. Abijah before he fought them, reasoned with them, to persuade them, though not to return to the house of David, (that matter was settled by the divine determination, and he acquiesced,) yet to desist from fighting against the house of David. He would not have them *withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David, v.* 8. but at least to be content with what they had. Note, It is good to try reason before we use force. If the point may be gained by dint of argument, better so than by dint of sword. We must never fly to violent methods, till all the arts of persuasion have been tried in vain. War, that *ultima ratio regum*—that last resort of kings, should be preceded by every expedient calculated to prevent it. Fair reasoning may do a great deal of good, and prevent a great deal of mischief: *How forcible are right words!* Abijah was got with his army into the heart of their country; for he made this speech upon a hill in mount Ephraim, where he might be heard by Jeroboam, and the principal officers, with whom, it is probable, he desired to have a treaty, which they consented to. It has been usual for great generals to make speeches to their own soldiers, to animate them; this speech of Abijah had that tendency, but was directed to Jeroboam and all Israel.

Two things Abijah undertakes to make out for the satisfaction of his own men, and the conviction of the enemy.

I. That he had right on his side, a *jus divinum*—a divine right: You know, or ought to know, that God gave the kingdom to David and his sons for ever, *v.* 5. not by common providence, his usual way of disposing of kingdoms, but by a covenant of salt, a lasting covenant, a covenant made by sacrifice, which was always salted; so Bishop Patrick. All Israel had owned that David was a king of God's making, and that God had entailed the crown upon his family; so that Jeroboam's taking the crown of Israel, at first, was not justifiable: yet it is not certain that he refers chiefly to that, for he knew that Jeroboam had a grant from God of the 10 tribes; his attempt, however, now to disturb the peace and possession of the king of Judah, was by no means excusable; for when the 10 tribes were given him, two were reserved for the house of David. He shows, (1.) That there was a great deal of dishonesty and disingenuity in his first setting up of himself. He rebelled against his lord, who had preferred him, 1 Kings 11. 28. and basely took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness in a critical juncture, when, in gratitude to his old master, and in justice to his title, he ought rather to have stood by him, and helped to secure the people in their allegiance to him, than to head a party against him, and make a prey of him; which was unworthily done, and what he could not expect to prosper in. They that supported him are here called *vain men*, (a character perhaps borrowed from Judg. 11. 3.) men that did not act from any steady principle, but were given to change, and men of Belial, that were for shaking off the yoke of government, and setting those over them, that would do just as they would have them to do. (2.) That there was a great deal of impiety in his present attempt; for, in fighting against the house of David, he fought against the kingdom of the Lord. They who oppose right, oppose the righteous God who sits in the throne judging right, and cannot promise themselves success in so doing.

Right may indeed go by the worst, for a time; but it will prevail, at last.

2. That he had God on his side. This he insists much upon, that the religion of Jeroboam and his army was false and idolatrous; but for his part, he, and his people, the men of Judah, had the pure worship of the true and living God among them. It appears from the character given of Abijah, 1 Kings 15. 3. that he was not himself truly religious, and yet here he encouraged himself in this war, chiefly from the religion of his kingdom. For, (1.) Whatever he was otherwise, it should seem that he was no idolater, or if he connived at the high places and images, *ch.* 14. 3, 5. yet he constantly kept up the temple-service. (2.) Whatever corruptions there were in the kingdom of Judah, the state of religion among them was better than in the kingdom of Israel, with which they were now contending. (3.) It is common for those that deny the power of godliness, to boast of the form of it. (4.) It was the cause of his kingdom that he was pleading; and though he was not himself so good as he should be, yet he hoped that, for the sake of the good men and good things that were in Judah, God would now appear for them. Many that have little religion themselves, yet have so much sense and grace as to value it in others. See how he describes,

[1.] The apostasy of Israel from God. "You are a great multitude," said he, "far superior to us in number; but we need not fear you, for you have that among yourselves, that is enough to ruin you. For," *First*, "You have calves for your gods, *v.* 8. that are unable to protect and help you, and will certainly cause the true and living God to oppose you. Those will be Achans, troublers of your camp." *Secondly*, "You have base men for your priests, *v.* 9. You have cast off the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, whom God appointed to minister in holy things; and in conformity to the custom of the idolatrous nations, make any man a priest, that has a mind to the office, and will be at the charge of the consecration, though never so much a scandal to the office." Yet such, though very unfit to be priests, were fittest of all to be *their* priests; for what more agreeable to gods that were no gods than priests that were no priests? Like to like, both pretenders and usurpers.

[2.] The adherence of Judah to God. "But as for us, (*v.* 10.) we have not forsaken God. Jehovah is our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Israel, who is able to protect us, and give us success. He is with us for we are with him." *First*, "At home in his temple; we keep his charge, *v.* 10, 11. We worship no images, have no priests but what he has ordained, no rites of worship but what he has prescribed: both the temple-service and the temple-furniture are of his appointing; his appointment we abide by, and neither add nor diminish. These we have the comfort of, these we now stand up in the defence of; so that upon a religious, as well as a civil account, we have the better cause." *Secondly*, Here in the camp, he is our Captain, and we may therefore be sure that he is with us, because we are with him, *v.* 12. And as a token of his presence, we have here with us his priests, sounding his trumpets according to the law, as a testimony against you, and an assurance to us, that in the day of battle we shall be remembered before the Lord our God, and saved from our enemies;" for so this sacred signal is explained, Numb. 10. 9. Nothing is more effectual to imbolden men, and put spirit in them, than to be sure that God is with them, and fights for them. He concludes with fair warning to his enemies. "Fight not against the God of your fathers; it is folly to fight against the God of almighty power; but it is treachery and base ingratitude, to fight against your fathers' God, and you cannot expect to prosper."

13. But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them. 14. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. 15. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. 16. And the children of Israel fled before Judah; and God delivered them into their hand. 17. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. 18. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers. 19. And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him; Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof. 20. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died. 21. But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters. 22. And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, *are* written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

We do not find that Jeroboam offered to make any answer at all to Abijah's speech; though it was much to the purpose, he resolved not to heed it, and therefore heard it as though he heard it not; he came to fight, not to dispute; the longest sword, he thinks, will determine the matter, not the better cause: let us therefore see the issue, whether right and religion carry the day or no.

I. Jeroboam, who trusted to his politics, was beaten. He was so far from fair reasoning, that he was not for fair fighting; we may suppose that he felt a sovereign contempt for Abijah's harangue. "One stratagem," thinks he, "is worth twenty such speeches, we will soon give him an answer to all his arguments, he shall soon find himself overpowered with numbers, surrounded on every side with the instruments of death, and then let him boast of his religion and his title to the crown." A parley, it is probable, was agreed on, yet Jeroboam basely takes the advantage of it, and while he was treating, *laid his ambushment behind them*, against all the laws of arms. What honour could be expected in a *servant when he reigned?* Abijah was *for peace*, but *when he spake, they were for war*, Ps. 120. 7.

II. Abijah and his people, who trusted in their God, came off conquerors, notwithstanding the disproportion of their strength and numbers.

1. They were brought into a great strait, put into a great fright, *for the battle was before and behind*. A good cause, and, one which is designed to be victorious may, for a season, be involved in embarrassment and distress. It was David's case. *They compassed me about like bees*, Ps. 118. 10-12.

2. In their distress, when danger was on every side, which way should they look but upward for deli-

verance? It is an unspeakable comfort, that no enemy, (not the most powerful or politic,) no stratagem, or ambushment, can cut off our communication with heaven; our way thitherward is always open. (1.) *They cried unto the Lord*, v. 14. We hope they did this, before they engaged in this war, but the distress they were in made them renew their prayers, and quickened them to be importunate. God brings his people into straits, that he may teach them to *cry unto him*. Earnest praying is crying. (2.) *They relied on the God of their fathers*, depended upon his power to help them, and committed themselves to him, v. 18. The prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer, and this is that by which we overcome the world, *even our faith*, 1 John 5. 4. (3.) *The priest sounded the trumpets*, to animate them by giving them an assurance of God's presence with them. It was not only a martial but a sacred sound, and put life into their faith. (4.) They shouted in confidence of victory, "The day is our own, for God is with us." To the cry of prayer they added the shout of faith, and so became more than conquerors.

3. Thus they obtained a complete victory. *As the men of Judah shouted for joy in God's salvation, God smote Jeroboam* and his army with such terror and amazement, that they could not strike a stroke, but fled with the greatest precipitation imaginable, and the conquerors gave no quarter, so that they put to the sword 500,000 chosen men, v. 17. more, it is said, than ever we read of in any history to have been killed in one battle; but the battle was the Lord's, who would thus chastise the idolatry of Israel, and own the house of David. But see the sad effect of division: it was the blood of Israelites that was thus shed like water by Israelites, while the heathen, their neighbours, to whom the name of Israel had formerly been a terror, cried *Aha, so would we have it!*

4. The consequence of this, was that the children of Israel, though they were not brought back to the house of David, (which by so great a blow surely they would have been, had not the determinate counsel of God been otherwise,) yet, for that time, were *brought under*, v. 18. Many cities were taken, and remained in the possession of the kings of Judah; as Beth-el particularly, v. 19. What became of the golden calf there, when it came into the hands of the king of Judah, we are not told; perhaps it was removed to some place of greater safety, and, at length, to Samaria, Hos. 8. 5. yet in Jehu's time we find it at Beth-el, 2 Kings 10. 29. Perhaps Abijah, when it was in his power to demolish it, suffered it to stand, for *his heart was not perfect with God*; and not improving what he had got for the honour of God, he soon lost it all again.

Lastly, The death both of the conquered and of the conqueror, not long after.

1. Jeroboam never looked up after this defeat, though he survived it, 2 or 3 years. He could not recover *strength again*, v. 20. The Lord struck him either with some bodily disease, of which he languished; or with melancholy and trouble of mind, his heart was broken, and vexation at his loss brought his head, probably, by this time, a hoary head, with sorrow to the grave. He escaped the sword of Abijah, but God struck him: there is no escaping his sword.

2. Abijah waxed mighty upon it. What number of wives and children he had before, does not appear; but now he multiplied his wives to 14 in all, by whom he had 38 children, v. 21. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of those arrows. It seems, he had ways peculiar to himself, and sayings of his own, which were recorded with his acts in the history of those times, v. 22. But the number of his months was cut off in the midst, and, soon after

his triumphs, death conquered the conqueror. Perhaps he was too much lifted up with his victories, and therefore God would not let him live long to enjoy the honour of them.

CHAP. XIV.

In this and the two following chapters, we have the history of the reign of Asa; a good reign, and a long one. In this chapter, we have, I. His piety, v. 1. . 5. II. His policy, v. 6. . 8. III. His prosperity, and particularly a glorious victory he obtained over a great army of Ethiopians that came out against him, v. 9. . 15.

1. **SO** Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years. 2. And Asa did *that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God*: 3. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves; 4. And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. 5. Also he took away, out of all the cities of Judah, the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. 6. And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest. 7. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *them* walls and towers, gates and bars, *while* the land is yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought *him*, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built, and prospered. 8. And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand, and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these *were* mighty men of valour.

Here is,

I. Asa's general character, v. 2. He did *that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God*. 1. He aimed at pleasing God: studied to approve himself to him. Happy they that walk by this rule, to do that, not only which is right in their own eyes, or in the eyes of the world, but which is so in God's eyes. 2. He saw God's eye always upon him, and that helped much to keep him to what is good and right. 3. God graciously accepted of him in what he did, and approved it as good and right.

II. A blessed work of reformation which he set on foot immediately upon his accession to the crown.

1. He removed and abolished idolatry. Since Solomon admitted it in the latter end of his reign, nothing had been done to suppress it, and so, we presume, it had got ground, strange gods were worshipped, and had their altars, images, and groves; and the temple-service, though kept up by the priests, (ch. 13. 10.) was neglected by many of the people. Asa, as soon as he had power in his hands, made it his business to destroy all those idolatrous altars and images, v. 3. 5. they being a great provocation to a jealous God, and a great temptation to a careless unthinking people. He hoped by de-

stroying the idols, to *reform* the idolaters, which he aimed at, rather than to *ruin* them.

2. He revived and established the pure worship of God; and since the priests did their part in attending God's altars, he obliged the people to do their's, v. 4, *he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers*, and not the gods of the heathen, and *to do the law and the commandment*, that is, to observe all divine institutions, which many had utterly neglected. In doing this, *the land was quiet before him*, v. 5. Though they were much in love with their idols, and very loath to leave them, yet the convictions of their consciences sided with the commands of Asa, and they could not, for shame, refuse to comply with them. Note, They that have power in their hands, and will use it vigorously for the suppression of profaneness and the reformation of manners, will not meet with so much difficulty and opposition therein, as, perhaps, they feared. Vice is a sneaking thing, and virtue has reason enough on its side to make *all iniquity stop her mouth*, Ps. 107. 42.

III. The tranquillity of his kingdom, after constant alarms of war during the two last reigns. *In his days, the land was quiet ten years*, v. 1. no war with the kingdom of Israel, who did not recover the blow given them in the last reign, for a great while. Abijah's victory, which was owing, under God, to his courage and bravery, laid a foundation for Asa's peace, which was the reward of his piety and reformation. Though Abijah had little religion himself, he was instrumental to prepare the way for one that had much. If Abijah had not done what he did, to quiet the land, Asa could not have done what he did to reform it; for *Inter arma silent leges—Amidst the din of arms, the voice of law is unheard*.

IV. The prudent improvement he made of that tranquillity: *The land had rest, for the Lord had given him rest*. Note, *If God give quietness, who then can make trouble*, Job 34. 29. Those have rest indeed, to whom God gives rest: peace indeed, to whom Christ gives peace, *not as the world giveth*, John 14. 27. Now, 1. Asa takes notice of the rest they had, as the gift of God; *He hath given us rest on every side*. Note, God must be acknowledged, with thankfulness, in the rest we are blessed with, of body and mind, family and country. The rest was the reward of the reformation begun; *Because we have sought the Lord our God, he has given us rest*. Note, As the frowns and rebukes of Providence should be observed for a check to us in an evil way, so the smiles of Providence should be taken notice of for our encouragement in that which is good. See Hag. 2. 18, 19. Mal. 3. 12. We find by experience that it is good to *seek the Lord*; it *gives us rest*; while we pursue the world, we meet with nothing but vexation. 2. He consults with his people, by their representatives, how to make a good use of the present gleams of peace they enjoyed; and concludes with them, (1.) That they must not be idle, but busy. Times of rest from war should be employed in work, for we must always find ourselves something to do. In the years when he had no war, he said, "Let us build; still let us be doing." When the churches had rest, they were *built up*, Acts 9. 31. When the sword is sheathed, take up the trowel. (2.) That they must not be secure, but prepare for wars. In times of peace we must be getting ready for trouble, expect it, and lay up in store for it. [1.] He fortified his principal cities with *walls, towers, gates, and bars*, v. 7. "This let us do," says he, "*while the land is yet before us*," that is, "while we have opportunity and advantage for it, and have nothing to hinder us." He speaks as if he expected that, some way or other, trouble would arise, when it would be too late to fortify, and when they would wish they had

done it: *So they built and prospered.* [2.] He had a good army ready to bring into the field, v. 8. not a standing army, but the militia or trained-bands of the country. Judah and Benjamin were mustered severally; and Benjamin (which, not long ago, was called *little Benjamin*, Ps. 68. 27.) had almost as many soldiers as Judah, came as near as 28 to 30. so strangely had that tribe increased of late. The blessing of God can make a *little one to become a thousand*. It should seem, these two tribes were differently armed, both offensively and defensively. The men of Judah guarded themselves with targets, the men of Benjamin with shields, the former much larger than the latter, 1 Kings 10. 16, 17. The men of Judah fought with spears, when they closed in with the enemy: the men of Benjamin drew bows, to reach the enemy at a distance; both did good service, and neither could say to the other, *I have no need of thee*. Different gifts and employments are for the common good.

9. And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots, and came unto Mareshah. 10. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. 11. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude.* O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee. 12. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. 13. And Asa, and the people that *were* with him, pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host: and they carried away very much spoil. 14. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar: for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them. 15. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

Here is,

1. Disturbance given to the peace of Asa's kingdom by a formidable army of Ethiopians that invaded them, v. 9, 10. Though still they sought God, yet this fear came upon them, that their faith in God might be tried, and that God might have an opportunity of doing great things for them. It was a vast number that the Ethiopians brought against him, *a thousand thousand men*; and now he found the benefit of having an army ready raised against such a time of need. That provision which we thought needless, may soon appear to be of great advantage.

2. The application Asa made to God, on occasion of the threatening cloud which now hung over his head, v. 11. He that sought God in the day of his peace and prosperity, could, with holy boldness, cry to God in the day of his trouble, and call him *his God*. His prayer is short, but has much in it. (1.) He gives to God the glory of his infinite power

and sovereignty. *It is nothing with thee to help and save, by many or few, by them that are mighty, or by them that have no power.* See 1 S. 14. 6. God works in his own strength, not in the strength of instruments, Ps. 21. 13. nay, it is his glory to *help the weakest, and perfect strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*. "We do not say, Lord, take our part, for we have a good army for thee to work by: but, take our part, for without thee we have no power." (2.) He takes hold of their covenant-relation to God as their's. *O Lord our God*, and again, "*Thou art our God*, whom we have chosen and cleave to as our's, and who has promised to be our's." (3.) He pleads their dependence upon God, and the eye they had to him, in this expedition. He was well-prepared for it, yet trusted not to his preparations; but, "*Lord we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude*, by warrant from thee, aiming at thy glory, and trusting to thy strength." (4.) He interests God in their cause, "*Let not man,*" (*mortal man*, so the word is,) "*prevail against thee.* If he prevail against us, it will be said that he prevails against thee, because thou art our God, and we rest on thee, and go forth in thy name, which thou hast encouraged us to do. The enemy is a mortal man; make it to appear what an unequal match he is for an immortal God. Lord, maintain thine own honour: *hallowed be thy name.*"

3. The glorious victory God gave him over his enemies; (1.) God defeated the enemy, and put their forces into disorder, v. 12. *The Lord smote the Ethiopians*, smote them with terror, and an unaccountable consternation, so that they fled, and knew neither why nor whither. (2.) Asa and his soldiers took the advantage God gave them against the enemy. [1.] They destroyed them, *They fell before the Lord*, (for who can stand before him?) and before his host, either an invincible host of angels that were employed to destroy them, or the host of Israel, called *God's host*, because owned by him. [2.] They took the plunder of their camp; *carried away very much spoil* from the slain, and from the baggage. [3.] They *smote the cities* that were in league with them, to which they fled for shelter, and carried off the spoil of them, v. 13, and they were not able to make any resistance, *for the fear of the Lord came upon them*, that is, a fear which God struck them with, to that degree that they had no heart to withstand the conquerors. [4.] They fetched away the cattle out of the enemy's country, in vast numbers, v. 15. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

CHAP. XV.

Asa and his army were now returning in triumph from the battle, laden with spoils, and adorned with the trophies of victory; the pious prince, we may now suppose, studying what he should render to God for this great favour. He knows that the work of reformation, which he had begun in his kingdom, is not perfected; his enemies abroad were subdued, but there were more dangerous enemies at home, that were yet unconquered; idols in Judah and Benjamin: his victory over the former imboldens him vigorously to renew his attack upon the latter. Now here we have, I. The message which God sent him, by a prophet, to engage him to, and encourage him in, the prosecution of his reformation, v. 1. . 7. II. The life which this message put into that good cause, and their proceedings, in pursuance of it. Idols removed, v. 8. The spoil dedicated to God, v. 9. . 11. A covenant with God, and a law for the punishing of idolaters, v. 12. . 15. A reformation at court, v. 16. Dedicated things brought into the house of God, v. 18. All well, but that the high places were permitted, v. 17. And the effect of this was great peace, v. 19.

1. **A**ND the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed: 2. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto

him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3. Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: 4. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5. And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. 7. Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

It was a great happiness to Israel, that they had prophets among them; yet, while they were thus blessed, they were strangely addicted to idolatry, whereas, when the spirit of prophecy was ceased under the second temple, and the canon of the Old Testament was completed, (which was constantly read in their synagogues,) they were pure from idolatry; for the scriptures are of all other the *most sure word of prophecy*, and most effectual, and the church could not be so easily imposed upon by a counterfeit Bible, as by a counterfeit prophet.

Here was a prophet sent to Asa and his army, when they returned victorious from the war with the Ethiopians, not to compliment them and congratulate them on their success, but to quicken them to their duty; that is the proper business of God's ministers, even with princes and the greatest of men. The *Spirit of God* came upon the prophet, v. 1. both to instruct him what he should say, and to enable him to say it with clearness and boldness.

1. He told them plainly upon what terms they stood with God: let them not think that, having obtained this victory, all was their own for ever; no, he lets them know they were upon their good behaviour. Let them do well, and it will be well with them, otherwise not. 9. *The Lord is with you, while you be with him.* This is both a word of comfort, that those who keep close to God, shall always have his presence with them; and also a word of caution, "He is *with you, while you be with him*, but no longer; you have now a signal token of his favourable presence with you, but the continuance of it depends upon your perseverance in the way of your duty." 2. *"If ye seek him, he will be found of you."* Sincerely desire his favour, and aim at it, and you shall obtain it. Pray, and you shall prevail. He never said, nor ever will, *Seek ye me in vain.*" See Heb. 11. 6. But, 3. "If you forsake him and his ordinances, he is not tied to you, but will certainly forsake you, and then you are undone; your present triumphs will be no security to you; woe to you, when God departs."

II. He set before them the dangerous consequences of forsaking God and his ordinances, and that there was no way of having grievances redressed, but by repenting, and returning unto God. When Israel forsook their duty, they were overrun with a deluge of Atheism, impiety, irreligion, and all irregularity, v. 3. and were continually embarrassed with vexations and destroying wars, foreign and domestic, v. 5, 6. But when their troubles

drove them to God, they found it not in vain to seek him, v. 4. But the question is, What time does this refer to?

1. Some think it looks as far back as the days of the Judges. *A long season* ago, Israel was *without the true God*; for they worshipped false gods; it was a time of ignorance, for though they had priests, they had no teaching priests; though they had elders, yet no law, to any purpose, v. 3. These were sad times, when they were frequently oppressed by one enemy or other, and grievously harassed by Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and other nations, they were *vexed with all adversity*, v. 6. yet when, in their perplexity, they turned to God by repentance, prayer, and reformation, he raised up deliverers for them. Then was that maxim often verified, that God is with us, while we are with him. Whatsoever things of this kind were written afore-time, were written for our admonition.

2. Others think it describes the state of the ten tribes, (who were now properly called *Israel*,) in the days of Asa. *Now*, since Jeroboam set up the calves, though he pretended to honour the God that brought them out of Egypt, yet his idolatry has brought them to downright infidelity, they are *without the true God*, and no marvel, when they were without teaching priests; Jeroboam's priests were not teachers, and thus they came to be without law: it is next to impossible, that any thing of religion should be kept up without a preaching ministry. In those times, there was no peace, v. 5. Their war with Judah gave them frequent alarms; so did the late insurrection of Baasha, and other occasions not mentioned. They provoked God with all iniquity, and then he *vexed them with all adversity*; yet *when they turned to God*, he was entreated for them. Let Judah take notice of this, let their neighbours' harms be their warnings. Give no countenance to graven images, for you see what mischief they produce.

3. Others think the whole passage may be read in the future tense, and that it looks forward; hereafter, *Israel will be without the true God, and a teaching priest*, and they will be destroyed by one judgment after another till they *return to God, and seek him.* See Hos. 3. 4.

III. Upon this he grounded his exhortation to prosecute the work of reformation with vigour, v. 7. *Be strong, for your work shall be rewarded.* Note, 1. God's work should be done with diligence and cheerfulness, but will not be done without resolution. 2. This should quicken us to the work of religion, that we shall be sure not to lose by it ultimately. It will not go unrewarded. How should it, when the work is its own reward?

8. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Obed the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD that *was* before the porch of the LORD. 9. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: (for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God *was* with him:) 10. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa

11. And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep. 12. And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13. That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14. And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about. 16. And also *concerning* Maachab the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron. 17. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days. 18. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19. And there was no *more* war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

We are here told, what good effect the foregoing sermon had upon Asa.

I. He grew more bold for God than he had been; his victory would inspire him with some new degrees of resolution, but this message from God with much more; now he took courage, he saw how necessary a further reformation was, and what assurance he had of God's presence with him in it; and this made him daring, and helped him over the difficulties which had before deterred him, and driven him off from the undertaking. Now he ventured to destroy all the abominable idols, (and all idolatries are abominable, 1 Pet. 4. 3.) as far as ever his power went: Away with them all. He also renewed the altar of the Lord, which, it seems, was gone out of repair, though it was not above thirty-five years since Solomon's head was laid, who erected it. So soon did these ceremonial institutions begin to wax old, as things which, in the fullness of time, must *vanish away*, Heb. 8. 13.

II. He extended his influence further than before, v. 9. He summoned a solemn assembly, and particularly brought the strangers to it, who were come over to him from the ten tribes. 1. Their coming was a great encouragement to him; for the reason of their coming was because *they saw that the Lord his God was with him*. It is good to be with those that have God with them, to come into relation to, and contract acquaintance and friendship with, those that live in the fear and favour of God; *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, Zech. 8. 23. 2. The cognizance he took of them, and the invitation he gave them to the general assembly, were a great encouragement to them. All strangers are to be helped, but those that cast themselves on God's good providence, purely to keep a good conscience, are worthy of double honour. Asa gave orders for the gathering

of them together, v. 9. yet it is said, v. 10. *they gathered themselves together*, made it their own act, so forward were they to obey the king's orders. This meeting was held in the third month, probably, at the feast of Pentecost, which was in that month.

III. He and his people offered sacrifices to God, as his share of the spoil they had got, v. 11. Their offering here was nothing to Solomon's *ch. 7. 5.* which was owing to the diminution, either of their zeal, or of their wealth, or of both. These sacrifices were intended by way of thanksgiving for the favours they had received, and supplication for further favours. Prayers and praises are now our spiritual sacrifices. And as he took care that the altar should have its gift, so he took care that the temple should have its gold; *he brought into the house of God all the dedicated things*, v. 18. It is honesty to render to God the things that are his. What has been long designed for him, and long laid by for him, as, it should seem, these dedicated things had been, should, at length, be laid out for him. Will a man rob God, or make slow payment to him, who is always ready to do us good?

IV. *They entered into covenant with God*, repenting that they had violated their engagements to him, and resolving to do better for the future. It is proper for penitents, for converts, to renew their covenants. It should seem, the motion came not from Asa, but from the people themselves: let every man be a volunteer that covenants with God *Thy people shall be willing*, Ps. 110. 3.

Observe,

1. What was the matter of this covenant. Nothing but what they were before obliged to; and though no vow or promise of theirs could lay any higher obligation upon them, than they were already under from the divine precept, yet it would help to increase their sense of the obligation, to arm them against temptations, and would be a testimony to the equity and goodness of the precept. And by joining all together in this covenant, they strengthened the hands one of another. Two things they engaged themselves to. (1.) That they would diligently seek God themselves, seek his precepts, seek his favour. What is religion but seeking God, inquiring after him, applying to him, upon all occasions? We shall not enjoy him, till we come to heaven; while we are here, we must continue seeking. That they would seek him as the *God of their fathers*, in the way that their fathers sought him, and in dependence upon the promise made to their fathers; and that they would do it *with all their heart, and with all their soul*; for those only seek God acceptably and successfully, that are inward with him, intent upon him, and entire for him, in their seeking of him. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it; God will have all the heart, or none; and when a jewel of such inestimable value as the divine favour is to be found, it is worth while to seek it *with all our soul*. (2.) That they would, to the utmost of their power, oblige others to seek him, v. 13. They agreed, that *whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel*, that is, would either worship other gods, or refuse to join with them in the worship of the true God, that was either an obstinate idolater, or an obstinate atheist, he should be put to death. This was no new law of their own making, but an order to put in execution that law of God to this purport, Deut. 17. 2, &c. If this law had been duly executed, there had not been so many abominable idols found in Judah and Benjamin, v. 8. Whether men may now, under the gospel, be compelled by such methods as these, to seek the Lord, is justly questioned; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and yet mighty.

2. In what manner they made this covenant

CHAP. XVI.

(1.) With great cheerfulness, and all possible expressions of joy, *They swear unto the Lord*; not secretly, as if they were either ashamed of what they did, or afraid of binding themselves too fast to him; but with a loud voice, to express their own zeal, and to animate one another; and they all rejoiced at the oath, *v. 14, 15*. They did not swear to God with reluctance, (as the poor debtor confesses a judgment to his creditor,) but with all the pleasure and satisfaction imaginable, as the bridegroom plights his troth to the bride in the marriage covenant. Every honest Israelite was pleased with his own engagements to God, and they were all pleased with one another's. They rejoiced in it as a hopeful expedient to prevent their apostasy from God, and a happy indication of God's presence with them. Note, The times of renewing our covenant with God, should be times of rejoicing. And national reformation cannot but give general satisfaction to all that are good. It is an honour and happiness to be in bonds to God. (2.) They did it with great sincerity, zeal, and resolution: *they swear to God with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire*. The Israelites were now in an extraordinarily good frame; O that there had always been but such a heart in them! This comes in as the reason why they rejoiced so much in what they did, it was because they were hearty in it. Note, Those only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion, that are sincere and upright in it. What is done in hypocrisy, is a mere drudgery. But if God have the heart, we have the joy.

Lastly, We are told what was the effect of this their solemn covenanting with God.

1. God did well for them. He was *found of them, and gave them rest round about, v. 15*. so that there was no war, for a long time after, *v. 19*. no open general war, though there were constant bickerings between Judah and Israel upon the frontiers, *1 Kings 15. 16*. National piety procures national blessings.

2. They did, on the whole, well for him. They carried on the reformation so far, that Maachah the queen-mother was deposed for idolatry, and her idols destroyed, *v. 16*. This was bravely done of Asa, that he would not connive at idolatry in those that were nearest to him; like Levi, *that said to his father and mother, I have not seen him*, Deut. 33. 9. Asa knows he must honour God more than his grandmother, and dares not leave an idol in an apartment of his palace, while he is destroying idols in the cities of his kingdom. We may suppose this Maachah was so far convinced of her sin, that she was willing to subscribe the association mentioned, *v. 12, 13*. binding herself to seek the Lord, and therefore was not put to death, as those were, who refused to sign it; *great as well as small, women as well as men*; perhaps they specified *women*, with an eye to her; but because she had been an idolater, Asa thought fit to divest her of the dignity and authority she had, and, probably, he banished her the court, and confined her to privacy, lest she should influence and infect others. But the reformation was not complete, the high places were not all taken away, though many of them were, *ch. 14. 3, 5*. Those in the cities were removed, but not those in the country villages; or those in the cities of Judah, but not those in the cities of Israel which were reduced to the house of David; or those that were used in the service of false gods, but not those that were used in the service of the God of Israel; those he connived at, and yet his heart was perfect. There may be defects in some particular duties, where yet the heart, in the main, is upright with God; sincerity is something less than sinless perfection.

This chapter concludes the history of the reign of Asa, but does not furnish so pleasing an idea of his latter end as of his beginning. I. Here is a foolish treaty with Ben-hadad king of Syria, *v. 1-6*. II. The reproof which God sent him for it by a prophet, *v. 7-9*. III. Asa's displeasure against the prophet for his faithfulness, *v. 10*. IV. The sickness, death, and burial, of Asa, *v. 11-14*.

1. **I**N the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 2. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3. *There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me*. 4. And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. 5. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. 6. Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was a building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

How to reconcile the date of this event with the history of the kings, I am quite at a loss; Baasha died in the 26th year of Asa, *1 Kings 16. 8*. How then could this be done in his 36th year, when Baasha's family was quite cut off, and Omri was upon the throne? It is generally said to be meant of the 36th year of the kingdom of Asa, namely, that of Judah, beginning from the first of Rehoboam, and so it coincides with the 16th of Asa's reign. But then *ch. 15. 19*. must be so understood; and how could it be spoken of as a great thing that there was no more war till the 15th year of Asa, when that passage immediately before was in his 15th year, *ch. 15. 10*. and after this miscarriage of his, here recorded, he had wars, *v. 9*. Josephus places it in his 26th year, and then we must suppose a mistake in the transcriber here, and *ch. 15. 19*. which, if we admit, the computation is easy.

This passage we had before, *1 Kings 15. 17, &c.* and Asa was several ways faulty in it. 1. He did not do well to make a league with Ben-hadad a heathen king, and to value himself so much upon it as he seems to do, *v. 3*. Had he relied more upon his covenant, and his father's, with God, he would not have boasted so much of his league, and his father's, with the royal family of Syria. If he had had a due regard to the honour of Israel in general, he would have found some other expedient to give Baasha a diversion, than by calling in a foreign force, and inviting into the country a common enemy, which, in process of time, might be a plague to Judah too. 3. It was, doubtless, a sin in Ben-hadad to break his league with Baasha, upon no provocation, but merely through the influence of a

bribe; and if so, certainly it was a sin in Asa to move him to it, especially to hire him to do it. The public faith of kings and kingdoms must not be made so cheap a thing. 4. To take silver and gold out of the house of the Lord for this purpose, was a great aggravation of the sin, *v. 2*. Must the temple be plundered to serve his carnal policies? He had better have brought gifts and offerings, with prayers and supplications, to the house of the Lord; that he might have engaged God on his side, and made him his friend; then he had not needed to have been at this expense to make Ben-hadad his friend. 5. It was well if Asa had not to answer for all the mischief that the army of Ben-hadad did unjustly to the cities of Israel, all the blood they shed, and all the spoil they made, *v. 4*. Perhaps Asa intended not they should carry the matter so far. But they that draw others to sin, know not what they do, nor where it will end: the beginning of sin, is as the letting forth of water.

However, the project succeeded. Ben-hadad gave Baasha a powerful diversion, obliged him to leave off building Ramah, and betake himself to the defence of his own country northward; which gave Asa an opportunity, not only to demolish his fortifications, but to seize the materials, and convert them to his own use.

7. And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand. 8. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thy hand. 9. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. 10. Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time. 11. And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12. And Asa, in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. 13. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. 14. And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of *spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art; and they made a very great burning for him.

Here is,

I. A plain and faithful reproof given to Asa by a prophet of the Lord, for making this league with

Ben-hadad. The reprover was Hanani, the seer, the father of Jehu another prophet, whom we read of, 1 Kings 16. 1. 2 Chron. 19. 2. We observed several things amiss in Asa's treaty with Ben-hadad. But that which the prophet here charges upon him as the greatest fault he was guilty of in that matter, is, his *relying on the king of Syria, and not on the Lord his God, v. 7*. He thought that though God was on his side, this would not stand him in stead, unless he had Ben-hadad on his side; that God either could not, or would not, help him, but he must take this indirect course to help himself. Note, God is much displeased, when he is distrusted, and when an arm of flesh is relied on more than his power and goodness. By putting our confidence in God we give honour to him, and therefore he thinks himself affronted, if we give that honour to another. He plainly tells the king that herein he had done foolishly, *v. 9*. It is a foolish thing to lean on a broken reed, when we have the Rock of ages to rely upon. To convince him of his folly, he shows him,

1. That he acted against his experience, *v. 8*. He, of all men, had no reason to distrust God, who had found him such a present powerful Helper, by whom he had been made to triumph over a threatening enemy, as his father before him, *because he relied upon the Lord his God, ch. 13. 18.—14. 11*. "*What!*" said the prophet, "*Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, enough to swallow up a kingdom? And yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand; and was not he sufficient to help thee against Baasha?*" Note, The many experiences we have had of the goodness of God to us, aggravate our distrust of him. Has he not helped us in six troubles? And have we any reason to suspect him in the seventh? But see how deceitful our hearts are? We trust in God, when we have nothing else to trust to, when need drives us to him; but when we have other things to stay on, we are apt to stay too much on them, and to lean to our own understanding as long as that has any thing to offer; but a believing confidence will be in God only, when a smiling world courts it most.

2. That he acted against his knowledge of God and his providence, *v. 9*. Asa could not be ignorant that *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, strongly to hold with them* (so it may be read) *whose heart is perfect toward him*; that is, (1.) That God governs the world in infinite wisdom, and the creatures, and all their actions, are continually under his eye. The eye of Providence is quick-sighted, it runs; it is intent, it runs to and fro; it reaches far, through the whole earth, no corner of which is from under it, not the most dark or distant; and his eye directs his hand, and the arm of his power; for he shows himself strong. Does Satan *walk to and fro in the earth*? Providence runs to and fro, is never out of the way, never to seek, never at a loss. (2.) That God governs the world for the good of his people; does all in pursuance of the counsels of his love concerning their salvation, all *for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect*, Isa. 45. 4. *Christ is head over all things to his church*, Eph. 1. 22. (3.) That they whose hearts are upright with him, may be sure of his protection, and have all the reason in the world to depend upon it. He is able to protect them in the way of their duty; for wisdom and might are his, and he actually intends their protection: a practical disbelief of this, is at the bottom of all our departures from God, and double-dealing with him. Asa could not trust God, and therefore made court to Ben-hadad.

3. That he acted against his interest. (1.) He had lost an opportunity of checking the growing

greatness of the king of Syria, *v. 7.* His *host is escaped out of thy hand*, which otherwise would have joined with Baasha's, and fallen with it. (2.) He had incurred God's displeasure, and henceforth must expect no peace, but the constant alarms of war, *v. 9.* They that cannot find in their hearts to trust God, forfeit his protection, and throw themselves out of it.

II. Asa's displeasure at this reproof. Though it came from God by one that was known to be his messenger, though the reproof was just, and the reasoning fair, and all intended for his good, yet *he was wroth with the seer*, for telling him of his folly; nay, *he was in a rage with him*, *v. 10.* Is this Asa? Is this he whose heart was perfect with the Lord his God all his days? Well, let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall. A wise man! and yet in a rage! An Israelite! and yet in a rage with a prophet! A good man! and yet impatient of reproof, and that cannot bear to be told of his faults! Lord, what is man, when God leaves him to himself? They that idolize their own conduct, cannot bear contradiction; and they that indulge a peevish passionate temper, may be transported by it into impieties as well as into indecencies, and will, some time or other, fly into the face of God himself. See what gall and wormwood this root of bitterness bore. 1. In his rage, he committed the prophet to the jail; *put him in a prison-house*, as a malefactor; *in the stocks*, so some read it. God's prophets meet with many that cannot bear reproof, but take it much amiss, yet they must do their duty. 2. Having proceeded thus far, *he oppressed some of the people*, probably, such as owned the prophet in his sufferings, or were known to be his particular friends. He that abused his power for the persecuting of God's prophet, was left to himself, further to abuse it for the crushing of his own subjects, whereby he weakened himself and lost his interest. Most persecutors have been tyrants.

III. His sickness. Two years before he died, *he was diseased in his feet*, *v. 12.* afflicted with the gout in a high degree. He had put the prophet in the stocks, and now God put him in the stocks; so his punishment answered his sin. *His disease was exceeding great*; it came to the height, so some; it flew up to his head, so others; and then it was mortal. This was his affliction; but his sin was, that in his disease, instead of seeking to the Lord for relief, he sought to the physicians. His making use of physicians, was his duty; but trusting to them, and expecting that from them, which was to be had from God only, were his sin and folly. The help of creatures must always be used with an eye to the Creator, and in dependence upon him, who makes every creature that to us which it is, and without whom the most skilful and faithful are physicians of no value. Some think that these physicians were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and were a sort of conjurers, to whom he applied himself, as if there were not a God in Israel.

IV. His death and burial. His funeral had something of extraordinary solemnity in it, *v. 14.* they made a very magnificent *burying for him*. I am loath to think (as some do) that he himself ordered this funeral pomp, and that it was an instance of his vanity, that he would be buried like the Gentiles, and not after the way of the Jews. It is said indeed, *He digged the sepulchre for himself*, as one mindful of his grave; but I am willing to believe it was rather an expression of the great respect his people retained for him, notwithstanding the failings and infirmities of his latter days. It was agreed to do him honour at his death. Note, The eminent piety and usefulness of good men ought to be remembered to their praise, though they had their blemishes.

Let their faults be buried in their graves, while their services are remembered over their graves. He that said, *There is not a just man that doeth good and sinneth not*, yet said also, *The memory of the just is blessed*; and let it be so.

CHAP. XVII.

Here begin the life and reign of Jehoshaphat, who was one of the first three among the royal worthies, one of the best that ever swayed the sceptre of Judah, since David's head was laid. He was a good son of a good father, so that, at this time, grace ran in the blood, even the blood-royal. Happy the son that had such a father, to lay a good foundation in him and for him! Happy the father that had such a son, to build so well upon the foundation he had laid! Happy the kingdom that was blessed with two such kings, two such reigns, together! In this chapter we have, I. His accession to, and establishment in the throne, *v. 1, 2, 5.* II. His personal piety, *v. 3, 4, 6.* III. The course he took to promote religion in his kingdom, *v. 7, 9.* IV. The mighty sway he bore among the neighbours, *v. 10, 11.* V. The great strength of his kingdom, both in garrisons and standing forces, *v. 12, 19.* Thus was his prosperity the reward of his piety, and his piety the brightest grace and ornament of his prosperity.

1. **A**ND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2. And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3. And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4. But sought to the *LORD* God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel: 5. Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. 6. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover, he took away the high places and groves out of Judah. 7. Also, in the third year of his reign, he sent to his princes, *even* to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8. And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. 9. And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

Here we find concerning Jehoshaphat,

I. What a wise man he was. As soon as he came to the crown he *strengthened himself against Israel*, *v. 1.* Ahab had now been three years upon the throne of Israel, an active warlike prince; the vigour of his beginning falling in with the decay of Asa's conclusion, it is probable that the kingdom of Israel had, of late, got ground of the kingdom of Judah, and began to grow formidable to it; so that the first thing Jehoshaphat had to do, was, to make his part good on that side, and to check the

growing greatness of the king of Israel, which he did so effectually, and without bloodshed, that Ahab soon courted his alliance, so far was he from giving him any disturbance, and proved more dangerous as a friend, than he could have been as an enemy. Jehoshaphat strengthened himself not to act offensively against Israel, or invade them, but only to maintain his own; which he did by fortifying the cities that were on his frontiers, and putting garrisons, stronger than had been, in the cities of Ephraim, which he was master of, *v.* 2. He did not strengthen himself, as his father did, by a league with the king of Syria, but by fair and regular methods, on which he might expect the blessing of God, and in which he trusted God.

II. What a good man he was. It is an excellent character that is here given of him, and very observable,

1. That he *walked in the ways of his father David*. In the characters of the kings, David's ways are often made the standard, as 1 Kings 15. 3, 11. 2 Kings 14. 3.—16. 2.—18. 3. But the distinction is no where else so strongly marked, as here, between his first ways and his last ways; for the last were not so good as the first: his ways, before he fell so foully in the matter of Uriah, (which is mentioned long after as the bar in his escutcheon, 1 Kings 15. 5.) were good ways, and though he happily recovered from that fall, yet perhaps he never, while he lived, fully retrieved the spiritual strength and comfort he lost by it. Jehoshaphat followed David, as far as he followed God, and no further. St. Paul himself thus limits our imitation of him, 1 Cor. 11. 1, *Follow me, as I follow Christ*, and not otherwise. Many good people have had their first ways, which were their best ways; their first love, which was their strongest love. In every copy we propose to write after, as we must single out that only which is good, so that chiefly which is best. The words here will admit another reading; they run thus: *He walked in the ways of David his father, (Hareshonim,) those first ways; or those ancient ways; he proposed to himself, for his example, the primitive times of the royal family, those purest times, before the corruptions of the late reign came in.* See Jer. 6. 16. The LXX leave out David, and so refer it to Asa; *he walked in the first ways of his father*, and did not imitate him in what was amiss in him, toward the latter end of his time. It is good to be cautious in following the best men, lest we step aside after them.

2. That he *sought not to Baalim, but sought to the Lord God his father*, *v.* 3, 4. The neighbouring nations had their Baalim, one had one Baal, and another had another; but he abhorred them all, had nothing to do with them: he *worshipped the Lord God of his father*, and him only; prayed to him only, and inquired of him only; both are included in seeking him.

3. That he *walked in God's commandments*, not only worshipped the true God, but worshipped him according to his own institution, *and not after the doings of Israel*, *v.* 4. Though the king of Israel was his neighbour and ally, yet he did not learn his way. Whatever dealings he had with him in civil matters, he would not have communion with him, nor comply with him in his religion: there he kept close to the rule.

4. That *his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord*, *v.* 6. or *he lifted up his heart*. He brought his heart to his work, and lifted up his heart in it; that is, he had a sincere regard to God in it. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*. His heart was enlarged in that which is good, Ps. 119. 32. He never thought he could do enough for God. He was lively and affectionate in his religion, *servant in spirit, serving the Lord*, cheerful and pleasant

in it; he went on in his work with alacrity; as Jacob, who, after his vision of God at Beth-el, *lifted up his feet*, Gen. 29. 1. margin. He was bold and resolute in the ways of God, and went on with courage; his heart was lifted up above the consideration of the difficulties that were in the way of his duty, he easily got over them all, and was not frightened with *winds and clouds*, from *sowing and reaping*, Eccl. 11. 4. Let us walk in the same spirit.

III. What a useful man he was; not only a good man, but a good king; he not only was good himself, but did good in his generation, he did a great deal of good.

1. He took away *the teachers of lies*, so images are called, Heb. 2. 18. the *high places* and *the groves*, *v.* 6. It is meant of those in which idols were worshipped; for those that were dedicated to the true God only, were not taken away, *ch.* 20. 33. It was only idolatry that he abolished; nothing debauched the nation more than those idolatrous groves or images, which he took away.

2. He sent forth teachers of truth. When he inquired into the state of religion in his kingdom, he found his people generally very ignorant, they *knew not that they did evil*; even in the last good reign, there had been little care taken to instruct them in their duty; and therefore Jehoshaphat resolves to begin his work at the right end, deals with them as reasonable creatures, will not lead them blind-fold, no, not into a reformation, but endeavours to have them well taught, knowing that that was the way to have them well cured; in this good work, he employed, (1.) His princes; those about him he sent forth, *to teach in the cities of Judah*, *v.* 7. He ordered them, in the administration of justice, not only to correct the people when they did ill, but to teach them how to do better, and to give a reason for what they did, that the people might be informed of the difference between good and evil. The princes or judges upon the bench have a great opportunity of teaching people their duty to God and man, and it is not out of their province, for the laws of God are to be looked upon as laws of the land. (2.) The *Levites and priests* went *with the princes, and taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them*, *v.* 8, 9. They were teachers by office, Deut. 33. 10. it was part of the work for which they had their maintenance; the priests and the Levites had little else to do. But, it seems, they had neglected it, pretending, perhaps, that they could not get the people to hear them. "Well," says Jehoshaphat, "you shall go along with the princes, and they with their authority shall oblige the people to come and hear you; and then if they be not well instructed, it is your fault." What an abundance of good may be done, when Moses and Aaron thus go hand in hand in the doing of it, when princes with their power, and priests and Levites with their scripture-learning, agree to teach the people the good knowledge of God and their duty! These itinerant judges, and itinerant preachers together, were instrumental to diffuse a blessed light throughout the cities of Judah. But it is said, *They had the book of the law of the Lord with them*. [1.] For their own direction, that from thence they might fetch all the instructions they gave to the people, and not *teach for doctrines the commandments of men*. [2.] For the conviction of the people, that they might see that they had a divine warrant for what they said, and delivered to them that only which they received from the Lord. Note, Ministers, when they go to teach the people, should have their Bibles with them.

IV. How happy he was in the favour of his God who signally owned and blessed him. *The Lord*

was with him, v. 3. *The word of the Lord was his helper*, so the Chaldee paraphrase. *The Lord established the kingdom in his hand*, v. 5. Those stand firm, that have the presence of God with them. If the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, that will establish the work of our hands, and establish us in our integrity.

V. How happy he was, in the affections of his people, v. 5. *All Judah brought him presents*, in acknowledgment of his kindness in sending preachers among them. The more there is of true religion among a people, the more there will be of conscientious loyalty. A governor that answers the end of government, will be supported. The effect of the favour both of God, and his kingdom, was, that he had riches and honour in abundance. It is undoubtedly true, though few will believe it, that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. And observe, it follows immediately, *His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord*. Riches and honour in abundance prove to many a clog and a hinderance in the ways of the Lord, an occasion of pride, security, and sensuality; but it had a quite contrary effect upon Jehoshaphat; his abundance was oil to the wheels of his obedience, and the more he had of the wealth of this world, the more was his heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord.

10. And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11. Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute-silver: and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store. 13. And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem. 14. And these are the numbers of them, according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand. 15. And next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16. And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. 17. And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield, two hundred thousand. 18. And next him was Jehozabad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war. 19. These waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

We have here a further account of Jehoshaphat's great prosperity, and the flourishing state of his kingdom.

1. He had good interest in the neighbouring

princes and nations. Though he was not perhaps so great a soldier as David, and therefore, on this account, their terror; nor so great a scholar as Solomon, and therefore, on this account, their oracle, yet the fear of the Lord fell so upon them, that is, God so influenced and governed their spirits, that they had all a reverence for him, v. 10. And, (1.) *None of them made war against him*. God's good providence so ordered it, that while the princes and priests were instructing and reforming the country, none of his neighbours gave him any molestation, to take him off from that good work. Thus when Jacob and his sons were going to worship at Beth-el, the terror of God was upon the neighbouring cities, that they did not pursue after them, Gen. 35. 5. and see Exod. 34. 24. (2.) Many of them brought presents to him, v. 11. to secure his friendship. Perhaps it was a tribute imposed upon them by Asa, who made himself master of the cities of the Philistines, and the tents of the Arabians, ch. 14. 14, 15. With the 7700 rams, and the same number of he-goats, which the Arabians brought, there was, probably, a proportionable number of ewes and lambs, she-goats and kids.

2. He had very considerable stores laid up in the cities of Judah; he pulled down his barns, and built larger, v. 12, *castles and cities of store*, for arms and victuals. He was a man of business, and aimed at the public good in all his undertakings, either to preserve the peace or prepare for war.

3. He had the militia in good order; it was never in better, since David modelled it. Five lord lieutenants (if I may so call them) are here named, with the numbers of those under their command, the serviceable men, that were fit for war in their respective districts; three in Judah, and two in Benjamin. It is said of one of these great commanders, Amasiah, that he willingly offered himself unto the Lord, v. 16. not only to the king, to serve him in this post, but to the Lord, to glorify him in it. He was the most eminent among them for religion; he accepted the place, not for the honour, or power, or profit, of it; but for conscience-sake toward God that he might serve his country. It was usual for great generals then to offer their spoils to the Lord, 1 Chron. 26. 26. but this good man offered himself first to the Lord, and then his dedicated things.

The number of the soldiers under these 5 generals, amounts to 1,160,000 men. A vast number for so small a compass of ground as Judah's and Benjamin's lot was, to furnish out and maintain. Abijah could bring into the field but 400,000, ch. 13. 3. Asa not 600,000, ch. 14. 8. yet Jehoshaphat has at command almost 1,200,000. But it must be considered, (1.) That God had promised to make the seed of Abraham like the sand of the sea for number. (2.) There had now been a long peace. (3.) We may suppose that the city of Jerusalem was very much enlarged. (4.) Many were come over to them from the kingdom of Israel, ch. 15. 9. which would increase the numbers of the people. (5.) Jehoshaphat was under a special blessing of God, which made his affairs to prosper greatly. The armies, we may suppose, were dispersed all the country over, and each man resided, for the most part, on his own estate; but they appeared often, to be mustered and trained, and were ready at call whenever there was occasion; the commanders waited on the king, v. 19. as officers of his court, privy-counsellors, and ministers of state.

But, lastly, observe; It was not this formidable army that struck a terror upon the neighbouring nations, that restrained them from attempting any thing against Israel, or obliged them to pay tribute, but the fear of God which fell upon them when Jehoshaphat reformed his country, and set up a

preaching ministry in it, v. 10. The ordinances of God are more the strength and safety of a kingdom, than its military force; its men of God, more than its men of war.

CHAP. XVIII.

The story of this chapter we had just as it is here related in the story of the reign of Ahab king of Israel, 1 *Kings* 22. While it redounds to the credit of Ahab more than any thing else recorded of him, that he was in league with so good a man as Jehoshaphat, it is a great blemish in the reign of Jehoshaphat, that he thus connected himself with so bad a man as Ahab. Here is, I. The alliance he contracted with Ahab, v. 1. II. His consent to join with him in his expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead out of the hands of the Syrians, v. 2, 3. III. Their consulting with the prophets, false and true, before they went, v. 4. . . 27. IV. The success of their expedition: Jehoshaphat hardly escaped, v. 28. . . 32. and Ahab received his death's wound, v. 33, 34.

1. **N**OW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. 2. And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria: and Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramoth-gilead. 3. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, *I am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war.

Here is, 1. Jehoshaphat growing greater. It was said before, *ch.* 17. 5. he had *riches and honour in abundance*; and here it is said again: his wealth and honour increased upon him by piety and good management.

But, 2. Not growing wiser, else he would not have joined with Ahab, that degenerate Israelite, who had sold himself to work wickedness. What good could he get by a man that was so bad? What good could he do to a man that was so obstinate an idolater, a persecutor? With him he joined in affinity, that is, married his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah, the worst match that ever was by any of the house of David; I wonder what Jehoshaphat could promise himself by it: (1.) Perhaps pride made the match, as it does many a one which speeds accordingly. His religion forbade him to marry his son to a daughter of any of the heathen princes that were about him, *Thou shalt not take their daughters to thy sons*; and, having riches and honour in abundance, he thought it a disparagement to marry him to a subject. A king's daughter it must be, and therefore Ahab's, little considering that Jezebel was her mother. (2.) Some think he did it in policy, hoping by this expedient to unite the kingdoms in his son, Ahab perhaps flattering him with hopes that he would make him his heir, when he intended no such thing.

This match drew Jehoshaphat, [1.] Into an intimate familiarity with Ahab; he made him a visit at Samaria. And Ahab, proud of the honour which Jehoshaphat did him, gave him a very splendid entertainment, according to the splendor of those times; *he killed sheep and oxen for him*, plain meat, *in abundance*, v. 2. In this, Jehoshaphat did not walk so closely as he should have done, in the ways of his father David, for *he hated the congregation of evil-doers, and would not sit with the wicked*, Ps. 26. 5. nor desired to *eat of their dainties*, Ps. 141. 4. [2.] Into a league with Ahab against the Syrians.

Ahab persuaded him to join forces with him in an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. Did not Ahab know that that, and all the other cities of Israel, did, of right, belong to Jehoshaphat, as heir of the house of David? With what face could he ask Jehoshaphat to assist him in recovering it for himself, whose title to the crown was usurped and precarious? Yet Jehoshaphat, an easy man, yields to go with him; *I am as thou art*, v. 3. Some men's kindnesses are dangerous, as well as their society infectious. The feast Ahab made for Jehoshaphat, was designed only to wheedle him into this expedition. *The kisses of an enemy are deceitful*.

4. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to-day. 5. Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it* into the king's hand. 6. But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him? 7. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 8. And the king of Israel called for one of *his* officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. 9. And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed. 11. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king. 12. And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent: let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. 13. And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak. 14. And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand. 15. And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name

of the LORD? 16. Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return, *therefore*, every man to his house in peace. 17. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee *that* he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? 18. Again he said, Therefore, hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand, and on his left. 19. And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake, saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20. Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? 21. And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do *even* so. 22. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee. 23. Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? 24. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 25. Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 26. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fel-low* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. 27. And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, *then* hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Harken, all ye people.

This is almost word for word the same with what we had, 1 Kings 22. We will not repeat what was there said, nor have we much to add, but may take occasion to think,

1. Of the great duty of acknowledging God in all our ways, and *inquiring at his word*, whatever we undertake. Jehoshaphat was not willing to proceed till he had done this, *v. 4*. By particular believing prayer, by an unbiassed consulting of the scripture and our own consciences, and by an observant regard to the hints of providence, we may make such inquiries, and very much to our satisfaction.

2. Of the great danger of bad company even to good men; those that have most wisdom, grace, and resolution, cannot be sure that they can converse familiarly with wicked people, and get no hurt by them. Jehoshaphat here, in complaisance to Ahab, sits in his robes, patiently hearing the false pro-

phets speaking lies in the name of the Lord, *v. 9*. can scarcely find in his heart to give him a too mild and gentle reproof for hating a prophet of the Lord, *v. 7*. and dares not rebuke that false prophet who basely abused that faithful seer, nor oppose Ahab who committed him to prison. They who venture among the seats of the scornful, cannot come off without a great deal of the guilt attaching to, at least, the omission of their duty, unless they have such measures of wisdom and courage as few can pretend to.

3. Of the unhappiness of those who are surrounded with flatterers, especially flattering prophets, who cry *peace* to them, and prophesy nothing but smooth things. Thus was Ahab cheated into his ruin, and justly; for he hearkened to such and preferred them that humoured him, before a good prophet that gave him fair warning of his danger. Those do best for themselves, that give their friends leave, and particularly their ministers, to deal plainly and faithfully with them, and take it not only patiently, but kindly. That counsel is not always best for us, that is most pleasing to us.

4. Of the power of Satan, by the divine permission, *in the children of disobedience*. One lying spirit can make 400 lying prophets, and make use of them to deceive Ahab, *v. 21*. The Devil becomes a murderer by being a liar, and destroys men by deceiving them.

5. Of the justice of God in giving those up to strong delusions to believe a lie, who will not receive the love of the truth, but rebel against it, *v. 21*. Let the *lying spirit prevail* to entice those to their ruin, that will not be persuaded to their duty and happiness.

6. Of the hard case of faithful ministers, whose lot it has often been to be hated, and persecuted, and ill-treated, for being true to their God, and just and kind to the souls of men. Micaiah, for discharging a good conscience, was buffeted, imprisoned, and condemned to the bread and water of affliction. But he could with assurance appeal to the issue, as all those may do, who are persecuted for their faithfulness, *v. 27*. The day will declare who is in the right, and who in the wrong, when Christ will appear, to the unspeakable consolation of his persecuted people, and the everlasting confusion of their persecutors, who will be made to *see in that day, v. 24*. what they will not now believe.

28. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went to the battle. 30. Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel. 31. And, it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel: therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to *depart* from him. 32. For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him. 33. And a *certain* man drew

a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot-man, Turn thy hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. 34. And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in *his* chariot against the Syrians until the even; and about the time of the sun going down he died.

We have here, 1. Good Jehoshaphat exposing himself in his robes, thereby endangered, and yet delivered. We have reason to think that Ahab, while he pretended friendship, really aimed at Jehoshaphat's life, to take him off, that he might have the management of his successor, who was his son-in-law, else he would never have advised him to enter into the battle with his robes on, which was but to make himself an easy mark to the enemy; and if really he intended that, it was as unprincipled a piece of treachery as ever man was guilty of, and justly was he himself taken in the pit he digged for his friend. The enemy had soon an eye upon the robes, and vigorously attacked the unwary prince, who, now, when it was too late, wished himself in the habit of the poorest soldier, rather than in his princely raiment. He cried out, either to his friends, to relieve him; (but Ahab took no care of that;) or to his enemies, to rectify their mistake, and let them know that he was not the king of Israel; or to God, for succour and deliverance; to whom else should he cry? And he found it was not in vain, *the Lord helped him out of his distress, by moving the captains to depart from him, v. 31.* God has all men's hearts in his hand, and turns them as he pleases, contrary to their own first intentions, to serve his purposes. Many are moved unaccountably both to themselves and others, but an invisible power moves them. 2. Wicked Ahab disguising himself, arming himself, thereby, he thought, securing himself, and yet slain, v. 33. No art, no arms, can save those whom God has appointed to ruin. What can hurt those whom God will protect? And what can shelter those whom God will destroy? Jehoshaphat is safe in his robes, Ahab killed in his armour; for the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

CHAP. XIX.

We have here a further account of the good reign of Jehoshaphat, I. His return in peace to Jerusalem, v. 1. II. The reproof given him for his league with Ahab, and his acting in conjunction, with him, v. 2, 3. III. The great care he took, thereupon to reform his kingdom, v. 4. IV. The instructions he gave to his judges, both those in the country-towns that kept the inferior courts, v. 5.. 7. and those in Jerusalem, that sat in the supreme judicature of the kingdom, v. 8.. 11.

1. **A**ND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. 2. And Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. 3. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thy heart to seek God. 4. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at

Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people, from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

Here is,

I. The great favour God showed to Jehoshaphat. 1. In bringing him back in safety from his dangerous expedition with Ahab, which had like to have cost him dear, v. 1, *He returned to his house in peace.* Notice is taken of this to intimate, (1.) That he fared better than he expected. He had been in imminent peril, and yet came home in peace. Whenever we return in peace to our houses, we ought to acknowledge God's providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. But if we have been kept through more than ordinary dangers, we are, in a special manner bound to be thankful. There was but a step perhaps between us and death, and yet we are alive. (2.) That he fared better than he deserved; he was out of the way of his duty, had been out upon an expedition which he could not well account for to God and his conscience, and yet he returned in peace; for God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor does he withdraw his protection every time we forfeit it. (3.) That he fared better than Ahab king of Israel did, who was brought home slain: though Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, *I am as thou art*, God distinguished him, for he knows and owns *the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.* Distinguishing mercies lay us under peculiarly strong obligations: two kings in the field together, *one taken and the other left*, one brought home in blood, the other in peace.

2. In sending him a reproof for his affinity with Ahab. It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told, in time, wherein we have erred, that we may repent, and amend the error, before it be too late. The prophet by whom the reproof is sent, is, Jehu the son of Hanani: the father was an eminent prophet in the last reign, as appeared by Asa's putting him in the stocks for his plain dealing; yet his son was not afraid to reprove another king. St. Paul would have his son Timothy not only not discouraged, but animated, by his sufferings, 2 Tim. 3. 11. 14.

(1.) He tells him plainly, that he had done very ill in joining with Ahab; "*Shouldst thou, a godly man, help the ungodly, give them a hand of fellowship, and lend them an assisting hand?*" Or, "*Shouldst thou love them that hate the Lord;* wilt thou lay those in thy bosom, whom God beholds afar off?" It is the black character of wicked people, that they are *haters of God*, Rom. 1. 30. Idolaters are so reputed in the second commandment: and therefore it is not for those that love God, to take delight in them, or contract intimacy with them. *Do not I hate those*, says David, *that hate thee?* Ps. 139. 21, 22. Those whom the grace of God has dignified, ought not to debase themselves. Let God's people be of God's mind.

(2.) That God was displeased with him for doing this; "*There is wrath upon thee, from before the Lord, and thou must, by repentance, make thy peace with him, or it will be the worse for thee.*" He did so, and God's anger was turned away. Yet his trouble, as recorded in the next chapter, was a rebuke to him for meddling with strife that belonged not to him. If he be so fond of war, he shall have enough of it. And the great mischiefs which his seed after him fell into by the house of Ahab, was the just punishment of his affinity with that house.

(3.) Yet he takes notice of that which was praise-worthy, as it is proper for us to do when we give a

reproof, *v. 3*, "*There are good things found in thee; and therefore, though God be displeased with thee, he does not, he will not, cast thee off.*" His abolishing idolatry with a heart fixed for God, and engaged to seek him, was a good thing which God accepted of, and would have him go on with, notwithstanding.

II. The return of duty which Jehoshaphat made to God for this favour. He took the reproof well, and was not wroth with the seer as his father was, but submitted. *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* See what effect the reproof had upon him. 1. He *dwelt at Jerusalem, v. 4.* minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by making any more such visits to Ahab. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will be yet wiser,* and will take warning, *Prov. 9. 8, 9.* 2. To atone (as I may say) for the visit he made to Ahab, he made a pious profitable visitation of his own kingdom; he *went out through the people in his own person from Beer-sheba in the south to mount Ephraim in the north, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers,* that is, did all he could towards it. (1.) By what the prophet said, he perceived that his former attempts for reformation were well-pleasing to God, and therefore he revived them, and did what was then left undone. It is good when commendations thus quicken us to our duty, and when the more we are praised for doing well, the more vigorous we are in well-doing. (2.) Perhaps he found that his late affinity with the idolatrous house of Ahab and kingdom of Israel, had had a bad influence upon his own kingdom; many we may suppose, were emboldened to revolt to idolatry, when they saw even their reforming king, so intimate with idolaters; and therefore he thought himself doubly obliged to do all he could to restore them. If we truly repent of our sin, we shall do our utmost to repair the damage we have any way done by it to religion, or the souls of others. We are particularly concerned to recover those that have fallen into sin, or been hardened in it by our example.

5. And he set judges in the land, throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city. 6. And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7. Wherefore now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for *there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.* 8. Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chiefs of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. 9. And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. 10. And what cause soever shall come to you or your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. 11. And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of

the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites *shall be* officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

Jehoshaphat having done what he could, to make his people good, he is here providing, if possible, to keep them so by the influence of a settled magistracy. He had sent preachers among them, to instruct them, *ch. 17. 7-9.* and that provision did well: but now he saw it further requisite to send judges among them, to see the laws put in execution, and to be a terror to evil doers. It is probable that there were judges up and down the country before, but either they neglected their business, or the people slighted them, so that the end of the institution was not answered; and therefore it was necessary it should be new modelled, new men employed, and a new charge given them. That is it, which is here done.

I. He erected inferior courts of justice in the several cities of the kingdom, *v. 5.* The judges of these courts were to keep the people in the worship of God, to punish the violations of the law, and to decide controversies between man and man. Here is the charge he gave them, *v. 6.* In which we have,

1. The means he prescribes to them for the keeping of them close to their duty; and these are two. (1.) Great caution and circumspection: *Take heed what ye do, v. 6.* And again, "*Take heed and do it, (v. 7.)*" Mind your business; take heed of making any mistakes; be afraid of misunderstanding any point of law, or the matter of fact." Judges, of all men, have need to be cautious, because so much depends upon their taking a thing right, (2.) Great piety and religion: *Let the fear of God be upon you,* that will be a restraint upon you to keep you from doing wrong, *Neh. 5. 15. Gen. 42. 18.* and an encouragement to you to be active in doing the duty of your place." Let destruction from God be a terror to them, as Job speaks, *Job 31. 23,* and then they will be a terror to none but evil doers.

2. The motives he would have them consider, to engage them to faithfulness: these are three, all taken from God. (1.) That from him they had their commission; his ministers they were. The powers that be, are ordained by him, and for him. "*Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord; your business is to glorify him, and serve the interests of his kingdom among men.*" (2.) That his eye was upon them: "*He is with you in the judgment,*" to take notice what you do, and call you to an account if you do amiss." (3.) That he is the great Example of justice to all magistrates: *There is no iniquity with him,* no bribery, nor respect to persons. Magistrates are called *gods*, and therefore must endeavour to resemble him.

II. He erected a supreme court at Jerusalem, which was advised with, and appealed to, in all the difficult causes that occurred in the inferior courts, and which gave judgment upon demurrers, (to speak in the language of our own law,) special verdicts, and writs of error. This court sat in Jerusalem, for *there were set the thrones of judgment,* there they would be under the inspection of the king himself. Observe,

1. The causes cognizable in this court; and they were of two kinds, as with us. (1.) Pleas of the crown, called here *the judgment of the Lord*, because the law of God was the law of the realm. All criminals were charged with the breach of some part of his law, and were said to offend against his peace, his crown and dignity. (2.) Common pleas, between party and party, called here *con*

roversies, v. 8. and *causes of their brethren*, v. 10. differences *between blood and blood*. This refers to Deut. 17. 8. between the blood of the person slain and the blood of the man-slayer. Since the revolt of the 10 tribes, all the cities of refuge, except Hebron, belonged to the kingdom of Israel; and therefore, we may suppose, the courts of the temple, or the horns of the altar, were chiefly used as sanctuaries in that case, and hence the trial of homicides was reserved for the court at Jerusalem. If the inferior judges did not agree about the sense of any law or commandment, any statute or judgment, this court must determine the controversy.

2. The judges of this court were some of the *Levites and priests* that were most learned in the law, eminent for wisdom, and of approved integrity, and some of the *chief of the fathers of Israel; heirs of the realm*, as I may call them, or persons of age and experience, that had been men of business, who would be the most competent judges of matters of fact, as the priests and Levites were of the sense of the law.

3. The two chiefs, or presidents, of this court. Amariah, the High Priest, was to preside in ecclesiastical causes, to direct the court, and be the mouth of it, or perhaps to be last consulted in cases which the judges themselves doubted of. Zebadiah, the prime-minister of that state, was to preside in all civil causes, v. 11. Thus there are diversities of gifts and operations, but all from the same Spirit, and for the good of the body. Some understand best *the matters of the Lord*, others *the king's matters*; neither can say to the other, *I have no need of thee*, for God's Israel has need of both; and as every one has received the gift, so let him minister the same. Blessed be God both for magistrates and ministers; scribes and statesmen; men of books, and men of business.

4. The inferior officers of the court; some of the *Levites* (such as had not abilities to qualify them for judges) *shall be officers before you*, v. 11. They were to bring causes into the court, and to see the sentence of the judges executed. And these hands and feet were as necessary in their places, as the eyes and heads, (the judges,) in their's.

5. The charge which the king gave them. (1.) They must see to it that they acted from a good principle; they must do all in the *fear of the Lord*, setting him always before them, and then they would act faithfully, conscientiously, and *with a perfect upright heart*, v. 9. (2.) They must make it their great and constant care to prevent sin, *to warn the people that they trespass not against the Lord*, inspire them with a dread of sin, not only as hurtful to themselves and the public peace, but as offensive to God, and that which would bring wrath upon the people if they committed it, and upon the magistrates if they did not punish it. *This do, and ye shall not trespass*; this implies that those who have power in their hands, contract the guilt of sin themselves, if they do not use their power for the preventing and restraining of sin in others. "You trespass if you do not keep them from trespassing." (3.) They must act with resolution. "Deal courageously, and fear not the face of man; be bold and daring in the discharge of your duty, and whoever is against you, God will protect you, *The Lord shall be with the good*." Wherever he finds a good man, a good magistrate, he will be found a good God.

CHAP. XX.

We have here, I. The great danger and distress that Jehoshaphat and his kingdom were in from a foreign invasion, v. 1, 2. II. The pious course he took for their safety, by fasting, and praying, and seeking God, v. 3.-13. III. The assurance which God, by a prophet,

immediately gave them of victory, v. 14.-17. IV. Their thankful believing reception of those assurances, v. 18.-21. V. The defeat which God gave to their enemies, thereupon, v. 22.-25. VI. A solemn thanksgiving which they kept for their victory, and for the happy consequences of it, v. 26.-30. VII. The conclusion of the reign of Jehoshaphat, not without some blemishes, v. 31.-37.

1. **I**T came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. 2. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, on this side Syria: and, behold, they *be* in Hazazon-tamar, which *is* Eng-gedi. 3. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask *help* of the LORD; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. 5. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6. And said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thy hand *is there not* power and might, so that none *is* able to withstand thee? 7. *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? 8. And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, 9. If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. 10. And now, behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; 11. Behold, *I say, how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. 12. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee. 13. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

We left Jehoshaphat, in the foregoing chapter, well employed in reforming his kingdom, and providing for the due administration of justice, and support of religion, in it, and expected nothing but to hear of the peace and prosperity of his reign; but here we have him in distress, which distress, how-

ever was followed by such a glorious deliverance as was an abundant recompense for his piety. If we meet with trouble in the way of duty, we may believe it is that God may have an opportunity of showing us so much the more of his marvellous loving kindness. We have here,

1. A formidable invasion of Jehoshaphat's kingdom by the Moabites and Ammonites, and their auxiliaries, *v.* 1. Jehoshaphat was surprised with the intelligence of it, when the enemy had already entered his country, *v.* 2. What pretence they had to quarrel with Jehoshaphat, does not appear; they are said to come *from beyond the sea*, meaning *the dead sea*, where Sodom had stood. It should seem, they marched through those of the ten tribes that lay beyond Jordan, and they gave them passage through their borders; so ungrateful were they to Jehoshaphat who had lately put his hand to help them in recovering Ramoth-gilead. Several nations joined in this confederacy, but especially *the children of Lot*, whom the rest helped, *Ps.* 83. 6-8. The neighbouring nations had feared Jehoshaphat, *ch.* 17. 10. but perhaps his affinity with Ahab had lessened him in their esteem, and they had some intimation that his God was displeased with him for it, which they fancied would give them an opportunity to make a prey of his kingdom.

II. The preparation Jehoshaphat made against the invaders. No mention is made of his mustering his forces, which yet it is most probable that he did, for God must be trusted in the use of means. But his great care was, to obtain the favour of God, and secure him on his side, which perhaps he was the more solicitous about, because he had been lately told that there was *wrath upon him from before the Lord*, *ch.* 19. 2. But he is of the mind of his father David, if we must be corrected, yet *let us not fall into the hands of man*. 1. He feared; consciousness of guilt made him fear; those that have least sin, are most sensible of it: the surprise added to the fright. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and preparation, *Heb.* 11. 7. 2. *He set himself to seek the Lord*, and, in the first place, to make him his friend. They that would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, must do it with fixedness of thought, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 3. *He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah*, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins, and *asking help of the Lord*. Fasting from bodily refreshments, upon such extraordinary occasions, is a token of self-judging for the sins we have committed, (we own ourselves unworthy of the bread we eat, and that God might justly withhold it from us,) and of self-denial for the future; fasting for sin implies a resolution to fast *from* it though it has been to us as a sweet morsel. Magistrates are to call their people to the duty of fasting and prayer upon such occasions, that it may be a national act, and so may obtain national mercies. 4. The people readily assembled out of all the cities of Judah in the court of the temple, to join in prayer, *v.* 4. and they *stood before the Lord*, as beggars at his door, with their wives and children; they and their families were in danger, and therefore they bring them with them to seek the Lord. "Lord, we are indeed a provoking people, that deserve to be abandoned to ruin; but here are little ones that are innocent, let not them perish in the storm." Nineveh was spared for the sake of *the little ones*, *Jonah* 4. 11. The place they met in, was the *house of the Lord*, before the *new court*, which was perhaps lately added to the former courts, that, as some think, which was called *the court of the women*; thus they came within reach of that gracious pro-

mise which God made, in answer to Solomon's prayer, *ch.* 7. 15, *Mine ears shall be attent to the prayer that is made in this place*. Jehoshaphat himself was the mouth of the congregation of God, and did not devolve the work upon his chaplains. Though the kings were forbidden to burn incense, they were allowed to pray and preach; as Solomon, and Jehoshaphat here.

The prayer Jehoshaphat prayed, upon this occasion, is here recorded, or part of it; and an excellent prayer it is.

(1.) He acknowledges the sovereign dominion of the Divine Providence; he gives to God the glory of it, and takes to himself the comfort of it, *v.* 6, "*Art not thou God in heaven?*" No doubt thou art, which none of the gods of the heathen are; make it to appear then. Is not thy dominion supreme over kings themselves, and universal over all kingdoms, even those of the heathen that know thee not? Control these heathen then; set bounds to their daring, threatening insults. Is there not in *thy hand the power and might* which none is able to withstand? Lord, exert it on our behalf. Glory in thine own omnipotence."

(2.) He lays hold on their covenant-relation to God, and interest in him. "Thou that art *God in heaven*, art the *God of our fathers*, *v.* 6. and *our God*, *v.* 7. Whom should we seek to, whom should we trust to, for relief, but to the God we have chosen and served."

(3.) He shows the title they had to this good land they were now in possession of; an indisputable title it was, *Thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend*. This is referred to, *James* 2. 23. to show the honour of Abraham, that he was called *the friend of God*; we are *his seed*; and hope to be *beloved for the father's sake*; *Rom.* 11. 28. *Deut.* 7. 8. "We hold this land by grant from thee. Lord, maintain thine own grant, and warrant it against all unjust claims. Suffer us not to be *cast out of thy possession*, we are tenants, thou art our landlord, wilt thou not hold thine own?" *v.* 11. They that use what they have for God, may comfortably hope that he will secure it to them.

(4.) He makes mention of the sanctuary, the temple they had built for God's name, *v.* 8. not as if that merited any thing at God's hand, for *of his own they gave him*, but it was such a token of God's favourable presence with them, that they had promised themselves he would hear and help them, when, in their distress, they cried to him before that house, *v.* 8, 9. "Lord, when it was built, it was intended for the encouragement of our faith at such a time as this. Here thy name is, here we are; Lord, help us for the glory of thy name."

(5.) He pleads the ingratitude and injustice of his enemies; "We are such as it will be thy glory to appear *for*; they are such as it will be thy glory to appear *against*; for [1.] They ill requite our ancient kindness. *Thou wouldest not let Israel invade them*, nor give them any disturbance, *Deut.* 2. 5, 9, 19. *Meddle not with the Edomites, distress not the Moabites, come not nigh the children of Ammon*, no, not though they provoke you; yet now see how they invade us." We may comfortably appeal to God against those that render us evil for good. [2.] "They break in upon our ancient rights. They come to *cast us out of our possessions*, and seize our land for themselves; *O our God, wilt thou not judge them*, *v.* 12. Wilt thou not give sentence against them, and execute it upon them?" The justice of God is the refuge of those that are wronged.

(6.) He professes his entire dependence upon God for deliverance; though he had a great army on foot, and well disciplined, yet, he said, "*We have no might against this great company, none*

without thee, none that we can expect any thing from, without thy special presence and blessing, none to boast of, none to trust to; but *our eyes are upon thee*, we rely upon thee, and from thee is all our expectation. The disease seems desperate, *we know not what to do*, we are quite at a loss, in a great strait; but this is a sovereign remedy, *our eyes are upon thee*, an eye of acknowledgment and humble submission, an eye of faith and entire dependence, an eye of desire and hearty prayer, an eye of hope and patient expectation. *In thee, O God, do we put our trust; our souls wait on thee.*"

14. Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite, of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; 15. And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat; Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16. To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz: and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them; for the LORD will be with you. 18. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head, with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. 19. And the Levites of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

We have here God's gracious answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer; and it was a speedy answer; *while he was yet speaking, God heard*: before the congregation was dismissed, they had assurance given them that they should be victorious, for it is never in vain to seek God.

1. The spirit of prophecy came upon a Levite that was present, not in any place of eminency, but *in the midst of the congregation*, v. 14. The Spirit, like the wind, *blows where*, and on whom, *he listeth*. He was of the sons of Asaph, and therefore one of the singers; on that office God would put an honour. Whether he was a prophet before this or no, is uncertain, most probably he was, which would make him the more regarded. There needed no sign, the thing itself was to be performed the very next day, and that would be confirmation enough to his prophecy.

2. He encouraged them to trust in God, though the danger was very threatening, v. 15. "*Be not afraid*; you have admitted fear enough to bring you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you from him again. *The battle is not your's*; it is not in your own strength, nor for your own cause, that you engage, *the battle is God's*, he does and will, as you have desired, interest himself in the cause."

3. He gives them intelligence of the motions of the

enemy, and orders them to march toward them, with particular directions where they should find them. *To-morrow* (the day after the fast,) *go ye down against them*, v. 16, 17. It is fit that he who commands the deliverance, should command those for whom the deliverance is to be wrought, and give the necessary orders, both for time and place.

4. He assures them, that they should be, not the glorious instruments, but the joyful spectators, of the total defeat of the enemy. "You shall not need to strike a stroke, the work shall be done to your hands, only stand still and see it," v. 17. As Moses said to Israel at the Red-sea, Exod. 14. 13, "*God is with you*, who is able to do his work himself, and will do it. If the battle be his, the victory shall be his too." Let but the christian soldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will tread them under his feet, and make him more than a conqueror.

5. Jehoshaphat and his people received these assurances with faith, reverence, and thankfulness. (1.) They bowed their heads. Jehoshaphat first, and then all the people, *fell before the Lord, and worshipped*; receiving with a holy awe and fear of God this token of his favour, and saying with faith, *Be it unto us according to thy word*. (2.) They lifted up their voices in praise to God, v. 19. An active faith can give thanks for a promise, though it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money; *God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice*, Ps. 60. 6.

20. And they rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tokoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. 21. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. 22. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. 23. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. 24. And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. 25. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance, both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, (which they stripped off for themselves,) more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. 26. And on the

fourth day, they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. 27. Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the fore-front of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy: for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets, unto the house of the LORD. 29. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. 30. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.

We have here the foregoing prayer answered, and the foregoing promise performed, in the total overthrow of the enemies' forces, and the triumph (for so it was rather than a victory) of Jehoshaphat's forces over them.

I. Never was army drawn out to the field of battle so as Jehoshaphat's army was. He had soldiers *ready prepared for war*, ch. 17. 18. but here is no notice taken of their military equipment, their swords or spears, their shields or bows. But Jehoshaphat took care, 1. That faith should be their armour; as they went forth instead of calling them to handle their arms, and stand to them, to keep ranks, observe orders, and fight valiantly, he bids them *believe in the Lord God*, and give credit to his word in the mouth of his prophets, then they should *prosper and be established*, v. 20. That is true courage, which faith inspires a man with; nor will any thing contribute more to the establishing of the heart in shaking times, than a firm belief of the power, and mercy, and promise of God. The heart is *fixed*, that thus *trusteth in the Lord*, and is kept in perfect peace. In our spiritual conflicts, this is the victory, this is the prosperity, even our faith. 2. That praise and thanksgiving should be their vanguard, v. 21. Jehoshaphat called a council of war, and it was resolved to appoint *singers to go out before the army*, to charge in the front, who had nothing else to do but to praise God; to praise his holiness, which is his beauty; to praise him as they did in the temple, that beauty of holiness, with that ancient and good doxology which eternity itself will not wear thread-bare, *Praise the Lord: for his mercy endureth for ever*. By this strange advance toward the field of battle, Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance upon the word of God, (which enabled him to triumph, before the battle,) to animate his own soldiers, to confound the enemy, and to engage God on their side; for praise pleases God better than all *burnt-offering and sacrifice*.

II. Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by thunder, or hail, or the sword of an angel, not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, or any surprising alarm, like that which Gideon gave the Midianites; but the Lord set ambushments against them, either hosts of angels, or as Bishop Patrick thinks, their own ambushments, whom God struck with such confusion, that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and *every one helped to destroy another*, so that *none escaped*. This God did, *when his people began to sing and to praise*, v. 22. for he delights to

furnish those with *matter* for praise, that have *hearts* for it. We read of his being *angry at the prayers of his people*, Ps. 80. 4. but never at their *praises*. When they did but begin the work of praise, God perfected the work of their deliverance. What ground there was for their jealousies one of another, does not appear, perhaps there was none; but so it was, that the Ammonites and the Moabites fell foul upon the Edomites and cut them off; and then they fell out with one another and cut one another off, v. 23. Thus God often makes wicked people instruments of destruction to another; and what alliances can be so firm as to keep those together, whom God designs to dash in pieces one against another? See the mischievous consequences of divisions which neither of the contending parties can give any good account of the reason of. Those are wretchedly infatuated, to their ruin, that fall foul upon their friends as if they were enemies.

III. Never was spoil so cheerfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do besides; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them all dead men, and their carcases spread as dung upon the face of the earth, v. 24. See how rich God is in mercy to them that call upon him in truth, and how often he outdoes the prayers and expectations of his people. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only did that, but enriched them with the spoil of the enemy. The plunder of the field was very great, and very rich; they found precious jewels with the dead bodies, which yet could not save them from being loathsome carcases; the spoil *was more than they could carry away* at once, and they were *three days in gathering it*, v. 25. Now it appeared what was God's end in bringing this great army against Judah; it was to humble them and prove them, that he might *do them good in their latter end*. It seemed, at first, a disturbance to their reformation, but it proves a recompense of it.

IV. Never was victory celebrated with more solemn and enlarged thanksgivings. 1. They kept a day of praise in the camp, before they drew their forces out of the field. Many thanksgivings, no doubt, were offered up to God immediately; but on the 4th day they assembled in a valley, where they blessed God with so much zeal and fervency, that that day's work gave a name to the place, the valley of *Berachah*, that is, *of blessing*, v. 26. The remembrance of this work of wonder was hereby perpetuated for the encouragement of succeeding generations to trust in God. 2. Yet they did not think this enough, but came in solemn procession, all in a body, and Jehoshaphat at the head of them, to Jerusalem, that the country as they passed along, might join with them in their praises, and that they might give thanks for the mercy there where they had by prayer obtained it, *in the house of the Lord*, v. 27, 28. Praising God must not be the work of a day only; but our praises, when we have received mercy, must be often repeated, as our prayers were, when we were in the pursuit of it. Every day we must bless God; as long as we live, and while we have any being, we must praise him, spending our time in that work in which we hope to spend our eternity. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments, *in the courts of the Lord's house*, Ps. 116. 19.

V. Never did victory turn to a better account than this, for, 1. Jehoshaphat's kingdom was hereby made to look very great and considerable abroad, v. 29. When they heard that God fought thus for Israel, they could not but say, *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun*, and *Happy art thou, O Israel!* It begat in the neighbours a

reverence of God, and a cautious fear of doing any injury to his people. It is dangerous fighting against those who have God with them. It was made very easy and quiet at home, *v.* 30. They were quiet among themselves. Those that were displeased at the destroying of the images and groves, were now satisfied, and obliged to own that since the God of Israel could deliver after this sort, he only is to be worshipped, and in that way only which himself has appointed. They were also quiet from the fear of insults from their neighbours, God having given them rest round about. And if he give rest, who can give disturbance?

31. And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. *He was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 32. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD. 33. Howbeit the high places were not taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers. 34. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold they *are* written in the book of Jehu, the son of Hanani, who *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. 35. And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly. 36. And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. 37. Then Eliezer, the son of Dodavah of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

We are now drawing toward the close of the history of Jehoshaphat's reign, for a further account of which, they who lived when this book was published, were referred to an authentic history of it, written by Jehu the prophet, *ch.* 19. 2. which was then extant, *v.* 34. This was the general character of his reign, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; kept close to the worship of God himself, and did what he could to keep his people close to it. But two things are here to be lamented.

1. The people still retained a partiality for the high places, *v.* 33. Those that were erected to the honour of strange gods, were taken away, *ch.* 17. 6. but those where the true God was worshipped, being less culpable, were thought allowable, and Jehoshaphat was loath to disoblige the people so far as to take them away, for as yet they had not prepared their hearts to the God of their fathers. They complied with Jehoshaphat's reformation, because they could not, for shame, do otherwise, but they were not hearty in it, did not direct their hearts to God in it, did not act in it from any good principle, nor with any zeal or resolution: and the best magistrates cannot bring to pass what they would in reformation, when the people are cool in it.

2. Jehoshaphat himself still retained a partiality

for the house of Ahab, because he had married his son to a daughter of that family, though he had been plainly reprov'd for it, and had like to have smarted for it. He saw and knew that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, did very wickedly, and therefore could not expect to prosper; yet he joined himself with him, not in war, as with his father, but in trade, became his partner in an East-India fleet bound for Ophir, *v.* 35, 36. There is an emphasis laid upon the time, *after this*, after God had done such great things for him, without any such scandalous and pernicious confederacies, given him not only victory, but wealth; yet, after this, to go and join himself with a wicked king, was very ungrateful. *After God had given him such a deliverance as this, should he again break God's commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* What could he expect but that *God should be angry with him?* Ezra 9. 13, 14. Yet he sends to him, to show him his error, and bring him to repentance, (1.) By a prophet, who foretold the blasting of his project, *v.* 37. And, (2.) By a storm, which brake the ships in the port before they set sail, by which he was warned to break off his alliance with Ahaziah, and, it seems, he took the warning; for when Ahaziah afterward pressed him to join with him he *would not*, 1 Kings 22. 49. See how pernicious a thing it is to join in friendship and society with evil-doers, it is a hard matter to break off from it. A man may much better keep himself from being taken in the snare, than recover himself out of it.

CHAP. XXI.

Never surely did any kingdom change its king so much for the worse as Judah did, when Jehoram, one of the vilest, succeeded Jehoshaphat, one of the best. Thus were they punished for not making a better use of Jehoshaphat's good government, and their disaffectedness (or coldness, at least) to his reformation, *ch.* 20. 32. They that knew not how to value a good king, are justly plagued with a bad one. Here is, I. Jehoram's elevation to the throne, *v.* 1. II. The wicked course he took to establish himself in it, by the murder of his brethren, *v.* 4. III. The idolatries, and other wickedness he was guilty of, *v.* 5, 6, 11. IV. The prophecy of Elijah against him, *v.* 12. 15. V. The judgments of God upon him, in the revolt of his subjects from him, *v.* 8. 10. and the success of his enemies against him, *v.* 16, 17. VI. His miserable sickness, and inglorious exit, *v.* 18. 20. VII. The preservation of the house of David notwithstanding, *v.* 7.

1. **N**OW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 2. And he had brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. 3. And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he *was* the first-born. 4. Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel. 5. Jehoram *was* thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab; for he

had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD. 7. Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever. 8. In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king. 9. Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots. 10. So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time *also* did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers. 11. Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*.

We find here,

I. That Jehoshaphat was a very careful indulgent father to Jehoram. He had many sons, who are here named, *v. 2.* and it is said (*v. 13.*) that they were better than Jehoram, had a great deal more wisdom and virtue, and lived up to their education, which he went counter to. They were very hopeful, and any of them more fit for the crown than he; and yet because he was the first born, *v. 3.* his father secured the kingdom to him, and portioned his brethren, and disposed of them so as that they would be easy, and give him no disturbance; as Abraham, when he made Isaac his heir, dismissed his other children with gifts. Herein Jehoshaphat was very kind and fair to his son, which might have obliged him to be respectful to him, and tread in the steps of so good a father. But it is no new thing for the children that have been most indulged by their parents, to be least dutiful to them. Whether, in doing this, he acted wisely and well for his people, and was just to them, I cannot say. His birth-right entitled him to a double portion of his father's estate, *Deut. 21. 17.* But if he appeared utterly unfit for government, (the end of which is the good of the people,) and likely to undo all that his father had done, it had been better perhaps to have set him aside, and taken the next that was hopeful, and not inclined, as he was, to idolatry. Power is a sacred thing, with which men may either do much good or much hurt; and therefore *Detur digniori—Let him that deserves it, have it. Salus populi suprema lex—The security of the people is the first consideration.*

II. That Jehoram was a most barbarous brother to his father's sons. As soon as he had settled himself in the throne, he slew all his brethren with the sword, either by false accusation, under colour of law, or rather by assassination, by some wicked hand or other he got them all murdered; pretending (it is likely) that he could not think himself safe in the government till they were taken out of the way. Those that mean ill themselves, are commonly, without cause, jealous of those about them. The wicked fear where no fear is, or pretend to do so, in order to conceal their malice. Jehoram, it is likely, hated his brethren, and slew them, for the same reason that Cain hated Abel, and slew him, because their piety condemned his impiety, and won

them that esteem with the people, which he had lost. With them he slew divers of the princes of Israel, who adhered to them, who were likely to avenge their death. The princes of Judah, those who had taught the good knowledge of the Lord, *ch. 17. 7.* are here called *princes of Israel*, as before, *fathers of Israel, ch. 19. 8.* because they were Israelites, indeed men of integrity. The sword which the good father had put into their hands, this wicked son sheathed in their bowels. Woe unto him that thus *foundeth a kingdom in blood, Hab. 2. 12.* it will prove a foundation that will sink the superstructure.

III. That Jehoram was a most wicked king, who corrupted and debauched his kingdom, and ruined the reformation that his good father and grandfather had carried on; he *walked in the way of the house of Ahab, v. 6.* made high places which the people were of themselves too forward to make, and did his utmost to set up idolatry again, *v. 11.* 1. As for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where he kept his court, he easily drew them into his spiritual whoredom; he *caused them to commit fornications*, seducing them *to eat things sacrificed to idols, Rev. 2. 20.* 2. The country people seem to have been brought to it with more difficulty; but they that would not be corrupted by flatteries, were driven by force, to partake in his abominable idolatries; he *compelled Judah thereto*. He used that power for the destruction of the church, which was given him for the edification of it.

IV. That when he forsook God and his worship, his subjects withdrew from their allegiance to him. 1. Some of the provinces abroad did so, that were tributaries to him. The Edonites revolted, *v. 8.* and though he chastised them, *v. 9.* yet he could not reduce them, *v. 10.* 2. One of the cities of his own kingdom did so: Libnah revolted, *v. 10.* and set up for a free state, as of old it had a king of its own, *Josh. 12. 15.* And the reason is here given, not only why God permitted it, but why they did it; they shook off his government, because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers, was become an idolater and a worshipper of false gods, and they could not continue subject to him, without some danger of being themselves also drawn away from God and their duty. While he adhered to God, they adhered to him; but when he cast God off, they cast him off. Whether this reason will justify them in their revolt or no, it will justify God's providence which ordered it so.

V. That yet God was tender of his covenant with the house of David, and therefore would not destroy the royal family, though it was so wretchedly corrupted and degenerated, *v. 7.* These things we had before, *2 Kings 8. 19. 22.* The tenor of the covenant was, that David's seed should be visited for their transgressions, but the covenant should never be broken, *Ps. 89. 30, &c.*

12. And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah. 13. But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, *which were better than thyself*; 14. Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and

thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: 15. And thou *shalt have* great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day. 16. Moreover, the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that *were* near the Ethiopians. 17. And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons. 18. And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19. And it came to pass, that, in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness; so he died of sore diseases: and his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. 20. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired; howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchre of the kings.

Here we have,

I. A warning from God sent to Jehoram by a writing from Elijah the prophet. By this it appears that Jehoram came to the throne, and showed himself what he was, before Elijah's translation. It is true, we find Elisha attending Jehoshaphat, and described as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, after the story of Elijah's translation, 2 Kings 3. 11. but that might be, and that description might be given of him, while Elijah was yet on earth: and it is certain that that history is put out of its proper place, for we read of Jehoshaphat's death, and Jehoram's coming to the crown, before we read of Elijah's translation, 1 Kings 22. 50. We will suppose that the time of his departure was at hand, so that he could not go in person to Jehoram; but that hearing of his great wickedness in murdering his brethren, he left this writing, it is probable, with Elisha, to be sent him by the first opportunity, that it might either be a means to reclaim him, or a witness against him, that he was fairly told what would be in the end hereof. The message is sent him in the name of *the Lord God of David his father*, v. 12. upbraiding him with his relation to David, as that which, though it was his honour, was an aggravation of his degeneracy.

1. His crimes are plainly charged upon him—His departure from the good ways of God, in which he had been educated, and which he had been directed and encouraged to walk in by the example of his good father and grandfather, who lived and died in peace and honour, v. 12.—His conformity to the ways of the house of Ahab, that impious scandalous family—His setting up and enforcing idolatry in his kingdom—And his murdering his brethren because they were better than himself, v. 13. These are the heads of the indictment against him.

2. Judgment is given against him for these crimes; he is plainly told, that his sin should certainly be the ruin, (1.) Of his kingdom and family, v. 14. "With a heavy stroke, even that of war and captivity, *will the Lord smite thy people and thy child-*

ren, &c. Bad men bring God's judgments upon all about them. His people justly suffer, because they had complied with his idolatry, and his wives, because they had drawn him to it. (2.) Of his health and life; "Thou shalt have great sickness, very painful and tedious, and, at last, mortal," v. 15. This he is warned of before, that his blood might be upon his own head, the watchman having delivered his soul; and that when these things, so particularly foretold, came to pass, it might appear that they did not come by chance, but as the punishment of his sins, and were so intended. And now if, as he had learned of Ahab to do wickedly, he had but learned even of Ahab to humble himself, upon the receipt of this threatening message from Elijah; if, like him, (1 Kings 21. 27.) he had *rent his clothes, put on sack-cloth, and fasted*, who knows but, like him, he might have obtained, at least, a reprieve? But it does not appear that he took any notice of it, he threw it by as waste-paper; Elijah seemed to him *as one that mocked*. But they that will not believe, shall feel.

II. The threatened judgments brought upon him, because he slighted the warning. No marvel that hardened sinners are not frightened from sin, and to repentance, by the threatenings of misery in another world, which is future and out of sight, when the certain prospect of misery in this world, the sinking of their estates, and the ruin of their healths, will not restrain them from vicious courses.

1. See Jehoram here stripped of all his comforts. God *stirred up the spirit of his neighbours* against him, who had loved and feared Jehoshaphat, but hated and despised him, looking upon it as a scandalous thing for a nation to change their gods. Some occasion or other they took to quarrel with him, invaded his country, but, as it should seem, fought neither against small nor great, but the king's house only; they made directly to that, and *carried away all the substance that was found in it*; no mention is made of their carrying any away captive, but the king's wives, and his sons, v. 17. Thus God made it evident, that the controversy was with him and his house. Here it is only said, *They carried away his sons*; but we find, *ch. 22. 1.* that they *slew them all*: blood for blood. He had slain all his brethren, to strengthen himself; and now, all his sons are slain, but one, and so he is weakened. If he had not been of the house of David, that one had not escaped; when Jeroboam's house, and Baasha's, and Ahab's, were destroyed, there was none left; but David's house must not be wholly extirpated, though sometimes wretchedly degenerated, because a blessing was in it; no less a blessing than that of the Messiah.

3. See him tormented with *sore diseases and of long continuance*, such as were threatened in the law against those that would not *fear the Lord their God*, Deut. 28. 58, 59. His disease was very grievous, it lay in his bowels; with that there was a complication of other sore diseases: it was very tedious, two years he continued ill, and could get no relief; for the disease was incurable, though he was in the prime of life, not 40 years old. Asa, whose heart was perfect with God, though in some instances he stepped aside, was diseased only in his feet; but Jehoram, whose heart was wicked, was struck in his inwards; and he that had no bowels of compassion toward his brethren, was so plagued in his bowels that they fell out. Even good men, and those who are very dear to God, may be afflicted with diseases of this kind; but to them they are fatherly chastisements, and by the support of divine consolations the soul may dwell at ease even then when the body lies in pain. These sore diseases seized him, just after his house was plundered, and his wives and children carried away. (1.) Perhaps his grief and anguish of mind for that calamity, might

occasion his sickness, or at least, contribute to the heightening of it. (2.) By this sickness, he was disabled to do any thing for the recovery of them, or the revenge of the injury done him. (3.) It added, no doubt, very much to his grief, in his sickness, that he wanted the society of his wives and children, and that all the substance of his house was carried away. To be sick and poor, sick and solitary, but especially to be sick and in sin, sick, and under the curse of God, sick, and destitute of grace to bear it with, no inward comfort to balance it with—is a most deplorable case.

3. See him buried in disgrace. He reigned but 8 years, and then *departed without being desired*, v. 20. No body valued him while he lived, none lamented him when he died, but wished no greater loss might ever come to Jerusalem. To show what little affection or respect they had for him, they would not *bury him in the sepulchres of the kings*, as thinking *him unworthy to be numbered among them*, who had governed so ill. The excluding of his body from the sepulchres of his fathers, might be ordered by Providence, as an intimation of the everlasting separation of the souls of the wicked, after death, from the spirits of just men. This further disgrace they put upon him, that they *made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers*, v. 19. His memory was far from being sweet and precious to them, and therefore they did not honour it with any sweet odours or precious spices; though we may suppose that his dead body, after so long and loathsome a disease, needed something to perfume it. The generality of the people, though prone enough to idolatry, yet had no true kindness for their idolatrous kings. Wickedness and profaneness make men despicable, even in the eyes of those who have but little religion themselves, while natural conscience itself often gives honour to those who are truly pious. They that *despise God, shall be lightly esteemed*, as Jehoram was.

CHAP. XXII.

We read, in the foregoing chapter, of the carrying away of Jehoram's sons and his wives; but here we find one of his sons, and one of his wives, left, his son Ahaziah, and his wife Athaliah, both reserved to be the shame and plague of his family. I. Ahaziah was the shame of it as a partaker, 1. In the sin, and, 2. In the destruction, of the house of Ahab, v. 1. 9. II. Athaliah was the plague of it, for she destroyed all the seed-royal, and usurped the throne, v. 10. . 12.

1. **AND** the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, reigned. 2. Forty and two years old *was* Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. 4. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab; for they were his counsellors, after the death of his father, to his destruction. 5. He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote

Joram. 6. And he returned to be healed in Jezreel, because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram, the son of Ahab, at Jezreel, because he was sick. 7. And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, by coming to Joram; for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu, the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8. And it came to pass, that when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them. 9. And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

We have here an account of the reign of Ahaziah, a short reign, (of one year only,) yet long enough, unless it had been better. He was called *Jehohaz*, ch. 21. 17. here *Ahaz-iah*, which is the same name, and of the same signification, only the words of which it is compounded, are transposed. He is here said to be 42 years old when he began to reign, v. 2. which could not be, for his father, his immediate predecessor, was but 40 when he died; and it is said, 2 Kings 8. 26. that he was 22 years old when *he began to reign*. Some make this 42 to be the age of his mother Athaliah, for in the original it is, *he was the son of 42 years*, that is, the son of a mother that was of that age; and justly is her age put for his, in reproach to him, because she managed him, and did what she would, she, in effect, reigned, and he had little more than the title of king. Many good expositors are ready to allow that this, with some few more such difficulties, arises from the mistake of some transcriber, who put 42 for 22, and the copies by which the error should have been corrected, might be lost. Many ancient translations read it here 22. Few books are now printed without some *errata*, yet the authors do not therefore disown them, nor are the errors of the press imputed to the author, but the candid reader amends them by the sense, or by comparing them with some other part of the work, as we may easily do this.

The history of Ahaziah's reign is briefly summed up in two clauses, v. 3, 4. That his mother and her relations were his counsellors to do wickedly, and it was to his destruction.

I. He did wickedly. Though by a special providence of God he was preserved alive, when all his brethren were slain, and reserved for the crown, notwithstanding he was the youngest of them; though the *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, when they had buried his father ingloriously, made him king, in hopes he would take warning by that not to tread in his steps, but would do better for himself and his kingdom; yet he was not influenced by the favours either of God or man, but *walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, did evil in the sight*

of the Lord like them, *v.* 3, 4. that is, He worshipped the same false gods that they worshipped, Baalim and Ashtoreth, supposing (as the learned Bishop Patrick thinks) that by these demons, as mediators, they might have easier access to the supreme *Numen*, the God of Israel, or that *these they might resort to at all times and for all matters*, as being *nearer at hand*, and *not of so high a dignity*, but of a *middle nature*, between the immortal God and mortal men—deified heroes; so they worshipped them as the church of Rome does saints and angels. That was sufficiently bad; but I wish there was no reason to suspect worse; I am apprehensive that they looked upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to be altogether such a one as these of Baalim, and them to be as great and as good as he, nay, upon one account, more eligible, inasmuch as these of Baalim encouraged all manner of lewdness and sensuality, which the God of Israel strictly forbade.

II. He was counselled by his mother, and her relations to do so. *She was his counsellor, v.* 3. and so were they *after the death of his father, v.* 4. While his father lived, he took care to keep him to idolatry; but when he was dead, the house of Ahab feared lest his father's miserable end should deter him from it, and therefore they were very industrious to keep him close to it, and to make him *seven times more a child of hell than themselves*. The *counsel of the ungodly* is the ruin of many young persons, when they are setting out in the world. This young prince might have had better advice, if he had pleased, from the princes and the judges, the priests and Levites, that had been famous in his good grandfather's time for teaching the knowledge of God; but the house of Ahab humoured him, and *he walked after their counsel*, gave himself up to be led by them, and did just as they would have him. Thus do they debase and destroy themselves, that forsake the divine guidance.

III. He was counselled by them to his destruction. So it proved. Those that counsel us to do wickedly, counsel us to our destruction; while they fawn and flatter, and pretend friendship, they are really our worst enemies. They that debauch young men, destroy them. 1. It was bad enough that they exposed him to the sword of the Syrians, drawing him in to join with Joram king of Israel, in an expedition to Ramoth-gilead, where Joram was wounded; an expedition that was not for his honour. Those that give us bad counsel in the affairs of religion, if regarded by us, may justly be made by God our counsellors to do foolishly in our own affairs. But that was not all. 2. By engaging him in an intimacy with Joram king of Israel, they involved him in the common ruin of the house of Ahab. He came on a visit to Joram, *v.* 6. just at the time that Jehu was executing the judgment of God upon that idolatrous family, and so was cut off with them, *v.* 7-9.

Here, (1.) See, and dread, the mischief of bad company, and of joining in with sinners. If not the infection, yet let the destruction, be feared; *Come out from Babylon*, that falling house, *Rev.* 18. 4. (2.) See, and acknowledge, the justice of God. His providence brought Ahaziah, just at this fatal juncture, to see Joram, that he might fall with him, and be taken as in a snare. This we had an account of before, *2 Kings* 9. 27, 28. It is here added, that he was decently buried, (not as Jehoram, whose dead body was cast into Naboth's vineyard, *2 Kings* 9. 26.) and the reason given is, because he was the son, that is the grandson, of good Jehoshaphat, *who sought the Lord with all his heart*. Thus is he remembered with honour long after his death, and some respect showed even to his degenerate and unworthy seed for his sake. *The memory of*

the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

10. But when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed-royal of the house of Judah. 11. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. 12. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

We have here what we had before, *2 Kings* 11. 1, &c.

1. A wicked woman endeavouring to destroy the house of David, that she might set up a throne for herself upon the ruins of it. Athaliah barbarously cut off all the seed-royal, *v.* 10. perhaps intending to transmit the crown of Judah after herself to some of her own relations, that though her family was cut off in Israel by Jehu, it might be planted in Judah.

2. A good woman effectually preserving it from being wholly extirpated. One of the late king's sons, a child of a year old, was rescued from among the dead, and saved alive by the care of Jehoiada's wife, *v.* 11, 12. that a *lamp might be ordained for God's anointed*; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

CHAP. XXIII.

Six years bloody Athaliah had tyrannised, in this chapter, we have her deposed and slain, and Joash, the rightful heir, enthroned. We had the account before, nearly as it is here related, *2 Kings*, 11. 4, &c. 1. Jehoiada prepared the people for the king, acquainted them with his design, armed them, and appointed them their posts, *v.* 1-10. II. He produced the king to the people, crowned and anointed him, *v.* 11. III. He slew the usurper, *v.* 12-15. IV. He reformed the kingdom, re-established religion, and restored the civil government, *v.* 16-21.

1. **A**ND in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. 2. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David. 4. This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors; 5. And a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people

shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. 6. But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they *are* holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD. 7. And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever *else* cometh into the house, he shall be put to death; but be you with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. 8. So the Levites, and all Judah, did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go *out* on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. 9. Moreover, Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that *had been* king David's, which *were* in the house of God. 10. And he set all the people, (every man having his weapon in his hand,) from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about. 11. Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and *gave him* the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

We may well imagine the bad posture of affairs in Jerusalem during Athaliah's 6 years' usurpation, and may wonder that God permitted it, and his people bore it, so long. But after such a dark and tedious night the returning day in this revolution was the brighter and the more welcome; the continuance of David's seed and throne was what God had sworn by his holiness, Ps. 89. 36. and an interruption was no defeasance; the stream of government here runs again in the right channel. The instrument and chief manager of the restoration is Jehoiada.

1. He here appears to be a man of great conduct; that reserved the young prince for so many years till he was fit to appear in public, and till the nation was grown weary of the usurper; prepared his work beforehand, and then effected it with admirable secrecy and expedition. When God has work to do, he will qualify and animate men for it.

2. A man of great interest. The captains joined with him, v. 1. The Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel came at his call to Jerusalem, v. 2. and were there ready to receive his orders. See what a command wisdom and virtue will give men. *The Levites and all Judah did as Jehoiada commanded*, v. 8. and, which is strange, all that were intrusted with the secret, kept their own counsel till it was executed. Thus the words of the wise are heard in quiet, Eccl. 9. 17.

3. A man of great faith. It was not only common equity, (much less his wife's relation to the royal family, that put him upon this undertaking,) but a regard to the word of God, and the divine entail of the crown, v. 3. *The king's son shall reign, must reign, as the Lord hath said*. His eye to the promise, and dependence upon that, added a great deal of glory to this undertaking.

4. A man of great religion. This matter was to

be done in the temple, which might occasion some breach of rule, and the necessity of the case might be thought to excuse it; but he gave special order that none of the people should come into the house of the Lord, but the priests and Levites only, who were holy, upon pain of death, v. 6, 7. Never let sacred things be profaned, no not for the support of civil rights.

5. A man of great resolution. When he had undertaken this business, he went through with it, *brought out the king, crowned him, and gave him the testimony*, v. 11. He ventured his head, but it was in a good cause, and therefore he went on boldly. It is here said, that his sons joined with him in anointing the young king, one of whom, it is likely, was that Zechariah whom Joash afterward put to death for reproving him, ch. 24. 20. which was so much the more ungrateful, because he bore a willing part in anointing him.

12. Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD. 13. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets; also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason! 14. Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. 15. So they laid hands on her: and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate, by the king's house, they slew her there. 16. And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people. 17. Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. 18. Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt-offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. 19. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none *which was* unclean in any thing should enter in. 20. And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. 21. And all the people of the

land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

Here is, 1. The people pleased, *v. 12, 13*. When the king stood at his pillar, whose right it was to stand there, *all the people of the land rejoiced to see a rod sprung out of the stem of Jesse*, Isa. 11. 1. When it seemed a withered root in a dry ground, to see what they despaired of ever seeing, a king of the house of David; what a pleasing surprise was it to them! They ran in transports of joy to see this sight, praised the king, and praised God, for they had with them: such as *taught to sing praise*.

2. Athaliah slain. She ran herself upon the point of the sword of justice; for, imagining her interest much better than it was, she ventured *into the house of the Lord*, at that time, and cried, *Treason, Treason!* But nobody seconded her, or sided with her: *the pride of her heart deceived her*; she thought all her own, whereas none were cordially so. Jehoiada, as protector in the king's minority, ordered her to be slain, *v. 14*. which was done immediately, *v. 15*. only care was taken that she should not be *slain in the house of the Lord*; that sacred place must not be so far disgraced, nor that wicked woman so far honoured.

3. The original contract agreed to, *v. 16*. In the *Kings* it was said, Jehoiada made a covenant between the *Lord*, the people, and the king, 2 Kings 11. 17. Here it is said to be between *himself*, the people, and the king; for he, as God's priest, was his representative in this transaction, or a sort of mediator as Moses was. The indenture was tripartite, but the true intent of the whole was, that *they should be the Lord's people*. God covenanted by Jehoiada to take them for his people; the king and people covenanted with him to be his; and then the king covenanted with the people to govern them *as the people of God*, and the people with the king to be subject to him, *as the Lord's people*, in his fear, and for his sake. Let us look upon ourselves and one another *as the Lord's people*, and it will have a powerful influence upon us in the discharge of all our duty both to God and man.

4. Baal destroyed, *v. 17*. They would not have done half their work, if they had destroyed the usurper of the *king's* right only, and not the usurper of *God's* right; if they had asserted the honour of the throne, and not that of the altar. The greatest grievance of Athaliah's reign, was the bringing in of the worship of Baal, and supporting of that; therefore that must be abolished in the first place. Down with Baal's house, his altars, his images; down with them all, and let the blood of his priests be mingled with his sacrifices; for God had commanded that seducers to idolatry should be put to death. Deut. 13. 5, 6.

5. The temple-service revived, *v. 18, 19*. This had been neglected in the last reigns; the priest and people wanting either power or zeal to keep it up, when they had princes that were disaffected to it. But Jehoiada *put the offices of the house of the Lord* into the proper course and proper hands again, which in the late times had been disturbed and invaded. (1.) He appointed the priests to their courses, for the due offering of sacrifices, according to the law of Moses. (2.) The singers to their's, according to the appointment of David. The sacrifices (it should seem) were *offered with rejoicing and singing*; and well they might be; *we joy in God when we receive the atonement*, Rom. 5. 11. (3.) The porters were put in their respective posts as David ordered, *v. 19*. and their office was to take care that none who were upon any account ceremonially unclean, should be admitted into the courts of the temple.

6. The civil government re-established, *v. 20*.

They brought the king in state to his own palace, and set him *upon the throne of the kingdom*, to give law, and give judgment, either in his own person, or in Jehoiada his tutor. Thus was this happy revolution perfected; the generality of the people rejoiced in it, the rest were quiet and made no opposition, *v. 21*. When the son of David is enthroned in the soul, all is quiet, and springs of joy are opened.

CHAP. XXIV.

We have here the history of the reign of Joash, the progress, and especially the period, of which, was not of a piece with its beginning, nor shone with so much lustre. How wonderfully he was preserved for the throne, and placed in it, we read before; now here we are told how he began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh. 1. In the beginning of his time, while Jehoiada lived, he did well; particularly, he took care to put the temple in good repair, *v. 1. . 14*. 11. In the latter end of his time, after Jehoiada's death, he apostatized from God, and his apostasy was his ruin. 1. He set up the worship of Baal again, *v. 15. . 18*. though warned to the contrary, *v. 19*. 2. He put Zechariah the prophet to death, because he reproved him for it, *v. 20. . 22*. 3. The judgments of God came upon him for it. The Syrians invaded him, *v. 23, 24*. He was struck with sore diseases; his own servants conspired against him, and slew him; and, as a mark of infamy upon him, he was not buried in the burying-place of the kings, *v. 25. . 27*.

1. **J**OASH was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Joash did *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. 4. And it came to pass after this, *that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD*. 5. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened *it* not. 6. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in, out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, the collection, *according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the LORD*, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness? 7. For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim. 8. And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD. 9. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection *that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness*. 10. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. 11. Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the

king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that *there was* much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. 12. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. 13. So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. 14. And when they had finished *it*, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, *even* vessels to minister, and to offer *withal*, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver: and they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

This account of Joash's good beginnings we had, as it stands here, 2 Kings 12. 1, &c. though the latter part of this chapter, concerning his apostasy, we had little of there. What is good in men we should take all occasions to speak of, and often repeat it; what is evil we should make mention of but sparingly, and no more than is needful.

We shall here only observe,

1. That it is a happy thing for young people, when they are setting out in the world, to be under the direction of those that are wise and good, and faithful to them, as Joash was under the influence of Jehoiada, during whose time *he did that which was right*. Let those that are young, reckon it a blessing to them, and not a burthen and check upon them, to have those with them, that will caution them against that which is evil, and advise and quicken them to that which is good: and let them reckon it not a mark of weakness and subjection, but of wisdom and discretion, to hearken to such. He that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. It is especially prudent for young people to take advice in their marriages, as Joash did, who left it to his guardian to choose him his wives, because Jezebel and Athaliah had been such plagues, v. 3. That is a turn of life, which often proves either the making or marring of young people, and therefore should be attended to with great care.

2. Men may go far in the external performances of religion, and keep long to them, merely by the power of their education, and influence of their friends, who yet have no hearty affection for divine things, nor any inward relish of them. Foreign inducements may push men on to that which is good, who are not actuated by a living principle of grace in their hearts.

3. In the shows of devotion, it is possible that those who have only the form of godliness, may outstrip those who have the power of it. Joash is more solicitous and more zealous about the repair of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reproves for his remissness in that matter, v. 6. It is easier to *build* temples than to *be* temples to God.

4. The repairing of churches is a good work, which all in their places should promote, for the decency and conveniency of religious assemblies. The learned tell us, that in the christian church,

anciently, part of the tithes were applied that way.

5. Many a good work would be done that now lies undone, if there were but a few active men to stir in it and put it forward. When Joash found that money did not come in as he expected one way, he tried another way, and that answered the intention. Many have honesty enough to follow, that have not zeal enough to lead, in that which is good. The throwing of money into a chest, through a hole in the lid of it, was a way that had not been used before, and perhaps the very novelty of the thing made it a successful expedient for the raising of money; a great deal was thrown in, and with a great deal of cheerfulness; they all rejoiced, v. 10. An invention to please people's humour may sometimes bring them to their duty. Wisdom herein is profitable to direct.

6. Faithfulness is the greatest praise, and will be the greatest comfort, of those that are intrusted with public treasure, or employed in public business. The king and Jehoiada faithfully paid the money to the workmen, who faithfully did the work, v. 12, 13.

15. But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; a hundred and thirty years old *was he* when he died. 16. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards his house. 17. Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king: then the king hearkened unto them. 18. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. 19. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. 20. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. 21. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the LORD. 22. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son: and when he died, he said, The LORD look upon *it*, and require *it*. 23. And it came to pass, at the end of the year, *that* the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. 24. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers:

so they executed judgment against Joash. 25. And when they were departed from him (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings. 26. And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess. 27. Now *concerning* his sons, and the greatness of the burdens *laid* upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they *are* written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a sad account of the degeneracy and apostasy of Joash. God had done great things for him; he had done something for God; but he proved ungrateful to his God, and false to the engagements he had laid himself under to him. *How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!* Here we find,

I. The occasions of his apostasy; when he did that which was right, it was *not with a perfect heart*; he never was sincere, never acted from a principle, but in complaisance to Jehoiada, who had helped him to the crown, and because he had been protected in the temple, and rose upon the ruins of idolatry. And therefore when the wind turned, he turned with it.

1. His good counsellor left him, and was by death removed from him. It was a mercy to him and his kingdom that Jehoiada lived so long. One hundred and thirty years, *v. 15*. By which it appears that he was born in Solomon's time, and had lived six entire reigns before this. It was an encouragement to him to go on in that good way which Jehoiada had trained him up in, to see what honour was done to Jehoiada at his death: they buried him among the kings, with this honourable encomium, perhaps it was part of the inscription on his grave-stone, that *he had done good in Israel*. Judah is called *Israel*, because the other tribes having revolted from God, they only were Israelites indeed. Note, It is the greatest honour to do good in our generations; and those who do that *which is good, shall have praise of the same*. He had done good toward God; not that any man's goodness can extend unto him, but he had done good toward his house, in reviving the temple-service, *ch. 23. 8*. Note, Those do the greatest good to their country, that lay out themselves in their places to promote religion. Well, Jehoiada finished his course with honour; but the little religion that Joash had was all buried in his grave, and after his death, both king and kingdom miserably degenerated. See how much one head may sustain, and what a great judgment to any prince or people, the death of godly, zealous, useful, men is. See how necessary it is that, as our Saviour speaks, *we have salt in ourselves*, that we act in religion from an inward principle, which will carry us on through all changes. Then the loss of a parent, a minister, a friend, will not be the losing of our religion.

2. Bad counsellors got about him, insinuated themselves into his affections, wheedled him, flattered him, *made obedience to him*, and, instead of condoling, congratulated him upon the death of his old tutor, as his release from the discipline he had

been so long under, unworthy a man, a king. They tell him he must be priest-ridden no longer, he is now discharged from *grave lessons and restraints*, he may do as he pleases: and (would you think it?) the princes of *Judah* were the men that were so industrious as to debauch him, *v. 17*. His father and grandfather were corrupted by the house of *Ahab*, from whom no better could be expected. But that the princes of *Judah* should be seducers to their king, was very sad. But they that incline to the *counsels of the ungodly*, will never want ungodly counsellors. They *made obedience to the king*, flattered him into an opinion of his absolute power, promised to stand by him in making his royal will and pleasure pass for a law, any divine precept or institution to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. And he hearkened to them: their discourse pleased him, and was more agreeable than Jehoiada's dictates used to be. Princes, and inferior people, have been many a time thus flattered into their ruin by those who have promised them liberty and dignity, but who have really brought them into the greatest servitude and disgrace.

II. The apostasy itself, *v. 18*, *They left the house of God, and served groves and idols*. The princes, it is likely, had a request to the king, which they tell him they durst not offer while Jehoiada lived; but now they hope it will give no offence; it is, that they may set up the groves and idols again, which were thrown down in the beginning of his reign, for they hate to be always confined to the dull old-fashioned service of the temple. And he not only gave them leave to do it themselves, but he joined with them. The king and princes, who, a while ago, were repairing the temple, now forsook the temple; who had pulled down groves and idols, now themselves served them. So inconsistent a thing is man, and so little confidence to be put in him!

III. The aggravations of this apostasy, and the additions of guilt to it. God *sent prophets to them*, *v. 19*, to reprove them for their wickedness, and to tell them what would be in the end thereof, and so to *bring them again unto the Lord*. It is the work of ministers to bring people, not to themselves, but to God; to bring those again to him, who have gone a whoring from him. In the most degenerate times, God *left not himself without a witness*; though they had dealt very disingenuously with God, yet he sent prophets to them, to convince and instruct them, and to assure them that they should find favour with him, if yet they would return: for he would rather sinners should *turn and live* than *go on and die*; and they that perish, shall be left inexcusable. The prophets did their part, they *testified against them*; but few or none *received their testimony*.

1. They slighted all the prophets, they would not give ear; they were so strangely wedded to their idols, that no reproofs, warnings, threatenings, or any of the various methods which the prophets took to convince them, would reclaim them. Few would hear them, fewer would heed them, but fewest of all would believe them or be governed by them.

2. They slew one of the most eminent; *Zechariah the son of Jehoiada*, and perhaps others. Concerning him observe,

(1.) The message which he delivered to them in the name of God, *v. 20*. The people were assembled in the court of the temple, (for they had not quite left it,) on occasion, probably of some solemn feast, when this Zechariah, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, and known (it is likely) to be a prophet, stood up in some of the desks that were in the court of the priests, and very plainly, but without any provoking language, told the people of their sin, and what would be the consequences of it. He does not impeach any particular persons, nor pre-

dict any particular judgments, as sometimes the prophets did, but as inoffensively as possible reminded them of what was written in the law. Let them but look into their Bibles, and there they would find, [1.] The precept they broke; "*Ye transgress the commandments of the Lord, you know you do so in serving groves and idols; and why will you so offend God and wrong yourselves?*" [2.] The penalty they incurred; "*You know if the word of God be true, you cannot prosper in this evil way; never expect to do ill, and fare well. Nay, you find already that because you have forsaken the Lord he hath forsaken you, as he told you he would,*" Deut. 29. 25-31. 16, 17. This is the work of ministers, by the word of God, as a lamp, and a light, to discover the sin of men, and expound the providences of God.

(2.) The barbarous treatment they gave him for his kindness and faithfulness in delivering this message to them, v. 21. By the conspiracy of the princes, or some of their party, and by the commandment of the king, who thought himself affronted by this fair warning, they stoned him to death immediately; not, under colour of law, accusing him as a blasphemer, a traitor, or a false prophet, but in a popular tumult, in the court of the house of the Lord—as horrid a piece of wickedness as perhaps any we read of in all the history of the kings. The person was sacred, a priest; the place sacred, the court of the temple, the inner court, between the porch and the altar; the message yet more sacred, we have reason to think that they knew it came from the spirit of prophecy; the reproof was just, the warning fair, both backed with scripture, and the delivery very gentle and tender; and yet so impudently and daringly do they defy God himself, that nothing less than the blood of the prophet can satisfy their indignation at the prophecy. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth,* that ever such a villany should be committed by men, by Israelites, in contempt and violation of every thing that is just, honourable, and sacred! That a king, a king in covenant with God, should command the murder of one whom it was his office to protect and countenance! The Jews say, There were seven transgressions in this; for they killed a priest, a prophet, a judge, they shed innocent blood, polluted the court of the temple, the sabbath, and the day of expiation; for, on that day, their tradition says, this happened.

(3.) The aggravation of this sin; that this Zechariah, who suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness to God and his country, was the son of Jehoiada, who had done so much good in Israel, and particularly had been as a father to Joash, v. 22. The affront done by it to God, and the contempt put on religion, are not so particularly taken notice of, as the ingratitude there was in it to the memory of Jehoiada. He remembered not the kindness of the father, but slew the son for doing his duty, and what the father would have done, if he had been there. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(4.) The dying martyr's prophetic imprecation of vengeance upon his murderers; *The Lord look upon it, and require it!* This came not from a spirit of revenge, but a spirit of prophecy; *He will require it.* This would be the continued cry of the blood they shed, as Abel's blood cried against Cain: "*Let the God to whom vengeance belongs, demand blood for blood.*" He will do it, for he is righteous. This precious blood was reckoned for quickly in the judgments that came upon this apostate prince; it came into the account afterward in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans: their misusing of the prophets was that which brought upon them ruin without remedy, ch. 36. 16. nay, our Saviour

makes the persecutors of him and his gospel answerable for the blood of this Zechariah; so loud, so long, does the blood of the martyrs cry, see Matth. 23. 35. such as this is the cry of the soul under the altar, Rev. 6. 10, *How long ere thou avengest our blood?* For it shall not always go unrevenged.

Lastly, The judgments of God which came upon Joash for this aggravated wickedness of his.

1. A small army of Syrians made themselves masters of Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, plundered the city, and sent the spoil of it to Damascus, v. 23, 24. God's people, while they kept in with God, had often been conquerors, when the enemy had the advantage of the greater number; but now, on the contrary, an inconsiderable handful of Syrians routed a very great host of Israelites, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers; and then they were not only put upon the level with their enemies, but opposed them with the utmost disadvantage; for their God not only departed from them, but turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The Syrians were employed as instruments in God's hand to execute judgments against Joash, though they little thought so, Isa. 10. 6, 7. and see Deut. 32. 30.

2. God smote him with great diseases of body, or mind, or both; either like his grandfather, ch. 21. 18. or like Saul, an evil spirit from God troubling him. While he was plagued with the Syrians, he thought that if he could but get clear of them, he should do well enough. But before they departed from him, God smote him with diseases. If vengeance pursue men, the end of one trouble will but be the beginning of another.

3. His own servants conspired against him. Perhaps he began to hope his disease would be cured, he was but a middle-aged man, and might recover it; but he that cometh up out of the pit, shall fall into the snare; when he thought he should escape death by sickness, he met it by the sword; they slew him in his bed, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada; by which it should seem that he did not only slay Zechariah, but others of the sons of Jehoiada for his sake. Perhaps they that slew him, intended to take vengeance for that blood; this, however, was what God intended, in permitting them to do it. Those that drink the blood of the saints, shall have their own blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. The regicides are here named, v. 26. and it is observable that the mothers of them both were foreigners, one an Ammonitess, and the other a Moabitess. The idolatrous kings, it is likely, countenanced those marriages which the law prohibited for the prevention of idolatry; and see how they resulted in their own destruction.

4. His people would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings, because he had stained his honour by his mal-administration. *Let him not be written with the righteous,* Ps. 69. 28. These judgments are called the burdens laid upon him, v. 27. for the wrath of God is a heavy burthen, too heavy for any man to bear. Or it may be meant of the threatenings denounced against him by the prophets, for those are called burdens; usually God sets some special marks of his displeasure upon apostates, in this life, for warning to all to remember Lot's wife.

CHAP. XXV.

Amaziah's reign is recorded in this chapter; none of the worst, and yet far from good. Most of the passages in this chapter we had before more briefly related, 2 Kings 14. Here we find Amaziah, I. A just revenger of his father's death, v. 1-4. II. An obedient observer of the command of God, v. 5-10. III. A cruel conqueror of the Edomites, v. 11-13. IV. A foolish worshipper of

the gods of Edom, and impatient of reproof for it, v. 14... 16. V. Rashly challenging the king of Israel, and smarting for his rashness, v. 17... 24. And lastly, ending his days ingloriously, v. 25... 28.

1. **A**MAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2. And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart. 3. Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father: 4. But he slew not their children, but *did as it is written* in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin. 5. Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of *their* fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice *men, able* to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6. He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. 7. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD *is not* with Israel, *to wit, with* all the children of Ephraim. 8. But if thou wilt go, do *it*, be strong for the battle; God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down. 9. And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this. 10. Then Amaziah separated them, *to wit, the* army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger. 11. And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. 12. And *other* ten thousand *left* alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces. 13. But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon,

and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Here is,

I. The general character of Amaziah, *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*, worshipped the true God, kept the temple-service a-going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it *with a perfect heart*, v. 2. that is, he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a cool and indifferent friend. Such is the character of too many in this Laodicean age: they do that which is good, but not with the heart, not with a perfect heart.

II. A necessary piece of justice which he did upon the traitors that murdered his father; he put them to death, v. 3. Though we should suppose they intended to avenge on their king the death of the prophet, as was intimated, *ch. 24. 25.* yet that would by no means justify their wickedness; for *they* were not the avengers, but presumptuously took God's work out of his hands. And therefore Amaziah did what became him, in calling them to an account for it; but kept within the rule of that law which forbade the putting of the children to death for the parents' sin, v. 4.

III. An expedition of his against the Edomites, who, some time ago, had revolted from under the dominion of Judah, to which he attempted to reduce them. Observe,

1. The great preparation he made for this expedition. (1.) He mustered his own forces, and marshalled them, v. 5. and found Judah and Benjamin in all but 300,000 men, that were fit for war, whereas, in Jehoshaphat's time, 50 or 60 years before, they were four times as many; sin weakens a people, diminishes them, dispirits them, and lessens their number and figure. (2.) He hired auxiliary troops out of the kingdom of Israel, v. 6. Finding his own kingdom defective in men, he thought to make it up with his money, and therefore took into his pay 100,000 Israelites. If he had advised with any of his prophets before he did this, or had but considered how little any of his ancestors got by their alliances with Israel, he would not have had this to undo again. But rashness makes work for repentance.

2. The command which God sent him by a prophet to dismiss out of his service the forces of Israel, v. 7, 8. He would not have him call in any assistance at all, it looked like distrust of God; if he made sure of his presence, the army he had of his own, was sufficient; but particularly, he must not take in *their* assistance, *for the Lord is not with the children of Ephraim, because they are not with him, but worship the calves.* This was a good reason why he should not make use of them, because he could not depend upon them to do him any service. What good could be expected from them that had not God with them; nor his blessing upon their undertakings? It is comfortable to employ those who, we have reason to hope, have an interest in heaven; and dangerous to associate with those from whom the Lord is departed. The prophet assured him that if he persisted in his resolution to take these idolatrous apostate Israelites with him, in hopes thereby to make himself strong for the battle, it was at his peril, they would prove a dead weight to his army, would sink and betray it; "*God shall make thee fall before the enemy, and these Israelites will be the ruin of thy cause; for God has power to help thee without them, and to cast thee down, though thou hast them with thee.*"

3. The objection which Amaziah made against this command, and the satisfactory answer which the prophet gave to that objection, v. 9. The king

had remitted 100 talents to the men of Israel for advance-money. "Now," says he, "if I send them back, I shall lose that; *out what shall we do for the hundred talents?*" This is an objection men often make against their duty; they are afraid of losing by it. "Regard not that," says the prophet, "*the Lord is able to give thee much more than this*; and, thou mayest depend upon it, he will not see thee lose by him. What is one hundred talents between thee and him? He has ways enough to make up the loss to thee: it is below thee to speak of it." Note, A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to bear as out in our duty, and to make up all the loss and damage we sustain in his service abundantly to our advantage, will make his yoke very easy, and his burthen very light. What is it to trust in God, but to be willing to venture the loss of any thing for him, in confidence of the goodness of the security he gives us that we shall not lose by him, but that it shall be made up to us in kind or kindness. When we grudge to part with any thing for God and our religion, this should satisfy us, that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent. The king lost 100 talents by his obedience; and we find just that sum given to his grandson Jotham as a present, *ch. 27. 5.* then the principal was repaid; and, for interest, 10,000 measures of wheat, and as many of barley.

4. His obedience to the command of God, which is upon record, to his honour. He would rather lose his money, disoblige his allies, and dismiss a fourth part of his army just as they were going to take the field, than offend God. *He separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again, v. 10.* And they went home in great anger, taking it as a great affront thus to be made fools of, and to be cashiered as men not fit to be employed, and being, perhaps, disappointed of the advantages they promised themselves in spoil and plunder, by joining with Judah against Edom. Men are apt to resent that which touches them in their profit or reputation, though it frees them from trouble.

5. His triumphs over the Edomites, *v. 11, 12.* He left dead upon the spot, in the field of battle, 10,000 men, 10,000 more he took prisoners, and barbarously killed them by throwing them down some deep and craggy precipice. What provocation he had to exercise this cruelty toward them, we are not told; but it was certainly very severe.

6. The mischief which the disbanded soldiers of Israel did to the cities of Judah, either in their return or soon after, *v. 13.* They took it so ill to be sent home, that if they might not go to share with Judah in the spoil of Edom, they would make a prey of Judah. Several cities that lay upon the borders they plundered, and killed 3000 men that made resistance. But why should God suffer this to be done? Was it not in obedience to him that they were sent home; and yet shall the country suffer by it? Surely God's way is in the sea! Did not the prophet say that God was not with the children of Ephraim, and yet they are suffered to prevail against Judah? Doubtless God intended thereby to chastise those cities of Judah for their idolatries, which were found most in those parts that lay next to Israel. The men of Israel had corrupted them, and now they were made a plague to them: Satan both tempts and torments.

14. Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. 15. Where-

fore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which could not deliver their own people out of thy hand? 16. And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Here is, 1. The revolt of Amaziah from the God of Israel to the gods of the Edomites. Egregious folly! Ahaz worshipped the gods of those that had conquered him; he had some little colour for that, *ch. 28. 23.* But to worship the gods of those whom he had conquered, who could not protect their own worshippers, was the greatest absurdity that could be. What did he see in the gods of the children of Seir, that could tempt him to set them up for his gods, and bow down himself before them? *v. 14.* If he had cast the idols down from the rock, and broken them to pieces, instead of the prisoners, he had discovered more of the piety, as well as more of the pity, of an Israelite; but, perhaps, for that barbarous inhumanity, he was given up to this ridiculous idolatry.

2. The reproof which God sent to him, by a prophet, for this sin. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and justly; yet before he sent to destroy him, he sent to convince and reclaim him, and so to prevent his destruction. The prophet reasoned with him very fairly, and very mildly; *Why hast thou sought the favour of those gods which could not deliver their own people? v. 15.* If men would but duly consider the inability of all those things to help them, which they have recourse to when they forsake God, they would not be such enemies to themselves.

3. The check he gave to the reprover, *v. 16.* He could say nothing in excuse of his own folly; the reproof was too just to be answered; but he fell into a passion with the reprover; (1.) He taunted him as saucy and impertinent, and meddling with that which did not belong to him; *Art thou made of the king's counsel?* Could not a man speak reason to him, but he must be upbraided as usurping the place of a privy-counsellor? But, as a prophet, he really was made of the king's counsel by the King of kings, in duty to whom, the king was bound not only to hear, but to ask and take his counsel. (2.) He silenced him; bade him forbear, and say not a word more to him. *He said to the Seer, See not, Isa. 30. 10.* Men would gladly have their prophets thus under their girdles, as we say, to speak just when and what they would have them speak, and not otherwise. (3.) He threatened him, *"Why shouldst thou be smitten?"* It is at thy peril, if thou sayest a word more of this matter." He seems to remind him of Zechariah's fate in the last reign, who was put to death for making bold with the king; and bids him take warning by him. Thus he justifies the killing of that prophet by menacing this, and so, in effect, makes himself guilty of the blood of both. The prophet who had ordered him to send back the army of Israel, though he contradicted his politics, and lost him 100 talents, yet he hearkened to, and was ruled by, *v. 10.* But this prophet, who dissuaded him from worshipping the gods of the Edomites, he ran upon with an unaccountable rage;

which must be attributed to the witchcraft of idolatry. He was easily persuaded to part with his *talents of silver*, but by no means with his *gods of silver*.

4. The doom which the prophet passed upon him for this. He had more to say to him by the way of instruction and advice; but, finding him obstinate in his iniquity, he forbore. He is *joined to idols; let him alone*, Hos. 4. 17. Miserable is the condition of that man with whom the blessed Spirit, by ministers and conscience, *forbears to strive*, Gen. 6. 3. And both the reprovers in the gate, and that in the bosom, if long brow-beaten and baffled, will, at length, forbear; so I *gave them up to their own heart's lusts*. The secure sinner, perhaps, values himself upon it as a noble and happy achievement to have silenced his reprovers and monitors, and to get clear of them; but what comes of it? *I know that God has determined to destroy thee*; it is a plain indication that thou art marked for ruin, *that thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel*. They that are deaf to reproof, are ripening apace for destruction, Prov. 29. 1.

17. Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash the son of Jehohaz, the son of Jehu king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face. 18. And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. 19. Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast; abide now at home, why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, *even thou*, and Judah with thee? 20. But Amaziah would not hear; for it *came* of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of *their enemies*, because they sought after the gods of Edom. 21. So Joash the king of Israel went up, and they saw one another in the face, *both* he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah. 22. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. 23. And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehohaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits. 24. And *he took* all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria. 25. And Amaziah, the son of Joash king of Judah, lived after the death of Joash, son of Jehohaz king of Israel, fifteen years. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, *are* they not written in the book of the Kings

of Judah and Israel? 27. Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there. 28. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

We have here this degenerate prince mortified by his neighbour, and murdered by his own subjects.

1. Never was proud prince more thoroughly mortified than Amaziah was by Joash king of Israel. This part of the story was as fully related, 2 Kings 14. 8, &c. as it is here—The foolish challenge which Amaziah sent to Joash, v. 17. his haughty scornful answer to it, v. 18. with the friendly advice he gave him to sit still and know when he was well off, v. 19. his wilful persisting in his challenge, v. 20, 21. the defeat that was given him, v. 22. and the calamity he brought upon himself and his city thereby, v. 23, 24. Now this story verifies two of Solomon's proverbs, (1.) *That a man's pride will bring him low*, Prov. 29. 23. it goes before his destruction, not only procures it meritoriously, but is often the immediate occasion of it. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. (2.) *That he that goes forth hastily to strive, will, probably, not know what to do in the end thereof, when his neighbour has put him to shame*, Prov. 25. 8. He that is fond of contention, may have enough of it, sooner than he thinks of.

But there are two passages in this story, which we had not before in the *Kings*. [1.] *That Amaziah took advice*, before he challenged the king of Israel, v. 17. But of whom? Not of the prophet, he was *not made of the king's counsel*; but of his statesmen that would flatter him, and bid him go up and prosper. It is good to take advice, but then it must be of those that are fit to advise us. Those that will not take advice from the word of God, which would guide them aright, will justly be left to the bad advice of those that will counsel them to their destruction. Let those he made fools, that will not be made wise. [2.] Amaziah's imprudence is here made the punishment of his impiety, v. 20. *It was of the Lord*; he left him to himself to act thus foolishly, that he and his people might be *delivered into the hands of their enemies*, because they had forsaken God, and *sought after the gods of Edom*. They that will not be persuaded to do well for their souls, will justly be given up to their own counsels to do ill for themselves even in their outward affairs.

2. Never was poor prince more violently pursued by his own subjects; *from the time* that he departed from the Lord, (so it may be read, v. 27.) the hearts of his subjects departed from him, and they began to form a design against him in Jerusalem. It is probable that they were exasperated against him more for his rash engaging in a war against Israel, than for his worshipping the gods of Edom. But at length, the ferment grew so high, and he perceived the plot to be laid so deep, that he thought fit to quit his royal city, and flee to Lachish, either as a private place where he might be hid, or as a strong place where he might be guarded; but they sent after him thither, and slew him there. By this it seems to have been done deliberately, and to have been the act, not of a disgusted servant or two, but of a considerable body that durst avow it. How unrighteous soever they were herein, God was righteous.

CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter gives us an account of the reign of Uzziah, (Azariah he was called in the Kings,) more fully than we had it before; though it was long, and in some respects illustrious, yet it was very briefly related, 2 *Kings* 14. 21.—15. 1, &c. Here is, I. His good character in general, v. 1. 5. II. His great prosperity in his wars, his buildings, and all the affairs of his kingdom, v. 6. . 15. III. His presumption in invading the priests' office, for which he was struck with a leprosy, and confined by it, v. 16. . 21. even to his death, v. 22, 23.

1. **T**HEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. 2. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. 3. Sixteen years old *was* Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that *which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 5. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. 6. And he went forth, and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims. 8. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly. 9. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem, at the corner-gate, and at the valley-gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. 10. Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country and in the plains; husbandmen *also*, and vine-dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. 11. Moreover, Uzziah had a host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe, and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, *one* of the king's captains. 12. The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour *were* two thousand and six hundred. 13. And under their hand *was* an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14. And Uzziah prepared for them, throughout all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to

cast stones. 15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal: and his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

We have here an account of two things concerning Uzziah:

I. His piety. In this he was not very eminent or zealous; yet he did that *which was* right in the sight of the Lord; he kept up the pure worship of the true God, as his father did, and *herein* better than his father—that we have no reason to think he ever worshipped idols as his father did, no not in his latter days, when his heart *was* lifted up. It is said, v. 5, He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who, some think, was the son of that Zechariah whom his grandfather Joash slew. He was one that *had* understanding in the visions of God; either the visions which he himself was favoured with, or the visions of the preceding prophets. He was well versed in prophecy, and conversed much with the upper world, was an intelligent, devout, good, man; and, it seems, had great influence with Uzziah. Happy are the great men, who have such about them, and are willing to be advised by them; but unhappy those, who seek God only while they have such with them, and have not a principle in themselves to bear them out to the end.

II. His prosperity. In general, *as long as* he sought the Lord, and minded religion, God made him to prosper. Note, 1. Those only prosper, whom God makes to prosper; for prosperity is his gift. 2. Religion and piety are friendly to outward prosperity. Many have found and owned this, that as long as they sought the Lord, and kept close to their duty, they prospered; but since they forsook God, every thing has gone cross.

Here are several particular instances of his prosperity.

(1.) His success in his wars. God helped him, (v. 7.) and then he triumphed over the Philistines, those old enemies of God's people, demolished the fortifications of their cities, and put garrisons of his own among them, v. 6. He obliged the Ammonites to pay him tribute, v. 8. He made all quiet about him, and kept them in awe.

(2.) The greatness of his fame and reputation. His name was celebrated throughout all the neighbouring countries, v. 8. and it was a good name, a name for good things with God and good people. This is true fame, and makes a man truly honourable.

(3.) His buildings. While he acted offensively abroad, he did not neglect the defence of his kingdom at home, but built towers in Jerusalem, and fortified them, v. 9. Much of the wall of Jerusalem was, in his father's time, broken down, particularly at the corner gate, ch. 25. 23. probably, his father had repaired it, but he, to prevent the like mischief for the future, fortified it, and built a tower at the corner gate. But his best fortification of Jerusalem was his close adherence to the worship of God, which if his father had not forsaken, the wall of Jerusalem had not been broken down. While he fortified the city, he did not forget the country, but built towers in the desert too, v. 10. to protect the country people from the inroads of the plunderers, bands of which sometimes alarmed them and plundered them, as ch. 21. 16.

(4.) His husbandry. He dealt much in cattle and corn, employed many hands, and got much wealth by it, for he took a pleasure in it, he loved husbandry, v. 10. and, probably, did himself in-

spect his affairs in the country, which was no disparagement to him, but an advantage, as it encouraged industry among his subjects. It is an honour to the husbandman's calling, that one of the most illustrious princes of the house of David followed it and loved it. He was none of those that delight in war, nor did he addict himself to sport and pleasure, but delighted in the innocent and quiet employments of the husbandman.

(5.) His standing armies. He had, as it should seem, two military establishments. [1.] A *host of fighting men* that were to make excursions abroad, they *went out to war by bands*, v. 11. They fetched in spoil from the neighbouring countries by way of reprisal for the depredations they had so often made upon Judah. [2.] Another army for *guards and garrisons*, that were ready to defend the country in case it should be invaded, v. 12, 13. So great were their number and valour, that they *made war with mighty power*; no enemy durst face them, or, at least, could stand before them. Men unarmed can do little in war; Uzziah therefore furnished himself with a great armory, whence his soldiers were supplied with arms offensive and defensive, v. 14. spears, bows, and slings, shields, helmets, and habergeons; swords are not mentioned, because it is probable that every man had a sword of his own, which he wore constantly. Engines were invented, in his time, for annoying besiegers with darts and stones shot from the towers and bulwarks, v. 15. What pity it is that the wars and fightings which come from men's lusts, have made it necessary for cunning men to employ their skill in inventing instruments of death!

16. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his destruction*: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: 18. And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense*: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed: neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God. 19. Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even arose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense-altar. 20. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. 21. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD; and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land. 22. Now the rest of the acts of Uz-

ziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. 23. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

Here is the only blot we find on the name of king Uzziah, and it is such a one as lies not on any other of the kings. Whoredom, murder, oppression, persecution, and especially idolatry, gave characters to the bad kings, and some of them blemishes to the good ones, David himself not excepted, witness the matter of Uriah. But we find not Uzziah charged with any of these; yet he *transgressed against the Lord his God*, and fell under the marks of his displeasure for it; not, as other kings, in vexatious wars or rebellions, but an incurable disease.

1. His sin was, invading the priests' office. The good way is one, by-paths are many; the transgression of his predecessors was, forsaking the temple of the Lord, and flying off from it, *ch.* 24. 18. and burning incense upon idolatrous altars, *ch.* 25. 14. *His transgression* was, intruding into the temple of the Lord, further than was allowed him, and attempting to *burn incense upon the altar of God*, for which, it is likely, he pretended an extraordinary zeal and affection. See how hard it is to avoid one extreme, and not run into another.

1. That which was at the bottom of his sin, was, pride of heart, a lust that ruins more than any other whatever. *When he was strong*, v. 16. (and he was marvellously helped by the good providence of God *till he was so*, v. 15.) when he was grown very great and considerable in wealth, interest, and power, instead of lifting up the name of God in gratitude to him who had done so much for him, his *heart was lifted up to his destruction*. Thus the prosperity of fools, by puffing them up with pride, destroys them. Now that he had done so much business, and won so much honour, he began to think no business, no honour, too great or too good for him; no, not that of the priesthood. Men's pretending to forbidden knowledge, and exercising themselves in things too high for them, are owing to the pride of their heart, and the fleshly mind they are vainly *puffed up with*.

2. His sin was, *going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense*; probably, on some solemn feast day, or when he himself had some special occasion for supplicating the divine favour. What should move him to this piece of presumption, or put it into his head, I cannot conjecture: none of all his predecessors, not the best, not the worst, attempted it: the law, he knew, was express against him, and there was no usage or precedent for him: he could not pretend any necessity, as there was for David's eating the show-bread. (1.) Perhaps he fancied the priests did not do their office so dexterously, decently, and devoutly, as they ought, and he could do it better. Or, (2.) He observed that the idolatrous kings did themselves burn incense at the altars of their gods; his father did so, and Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13. 1. an ambition of which honour was perhaps one thing that tempted them from the house of God, where it was not permitted them; and he, being resolved to cleave to God's altar, would try to break through this restraint, and come as near it as the idolatrous kings did to their altars. But it is called a *transgression against the Lord his God*. He was not content with the honours God had put upon him, but would usurp those that were forbidden him, like our first parents.

3. He was opposed in this attempt by the chief

priest and other priests that attended and assisted him, v. 17, 18. They were ready to burn incense for the king, according to the duty of their place; but if he offer to do it himself, they plainly let him know that he meddles with that which does not belong to him, and it is at his peril. They did not resist him by laying violent hands on him, though they were valiant men, but by reasoning with him, and showing him, (1.) That it was not lawful for him to burn incense: "*It appertaineth not to thee, O Uzziah, but to the priests*, whose birth-right it is, as sons of Aaron, and who are consecrated to the service." Aaron and his sons, were appointed by the law to burn incense, Exod. 30. 7. See Deut. 33. 10. 1 Chron. 23. 13. David had blessed the people, Solomon and Jehoshaphat had prayed with them and preached to them; Uzziah might have done this, and it would have been to his praise; but for burning incense, that service was to be performed by the priests only. The kingly and priestly offices were separated by the law of Moses, not to be united again but in the person of the Messiah. If Uzziah did intend to honour God, and gain acceptance with him, in what he did, he was quite out in his aim; for being a service purely of divine institution, he could not expect it should be accepted, unless it were done in the way, and by the hands, that God had appointed. (2.) That it was not safe. It shall not be *for thine honour from the Lord God*; more is implied; "*It will be thy disgrace, and it is at thy peril.*" The law runs express against all strangers that came nigh, Numb. 3. 10.—18. 7. that is, all that were not priests. Korah and his accomplices, though Levites, paid dear for offering to burn incense, which was the work of the priests only, Numb. 16. 35. The incense of our prayers must be, by faith, put into the hands of our Lord Jesus the great High Priest of our profession, else we cannot expect it should be accepted by God, Rev. 8. 3.

4. He fell into a passion with the priests that reproved him, and would push forward to do what he intended notwithstanding, v. 19. *Uzziah was wroth*, and would not part with the censor out of his hand: he took it ill to be checked, and would not bear it. *Nitumur in vetitum—We are prone to do what is forbidden.*

II. His punishment was, an incurable leprosy, which rose up in his forehead while he was contending with the priests. If he had submitted to the priests' admonition, acknowledged his error and gone back, all had been well; but *when he was wroth with the priests*, and fell foul upon them, then God was wroth with him, and smote him with a plague of leprosy. Josephus says that he threatened the priests with death if they opposed him, and that then the earth shook, the roof of the temple opened, and through the cleft a beam of the sun darted directly upon the king's face, wherein immediately the leprosy appeared. And some conjecture, that that was the earthquake in the days of Uzziah which we read of Amos 1. 1. and Zech. 14. 5.

Now this sudden stroke,

1. Ended the controversy between him and the priests; for when the leprosy appeared, they were emboldened to thrust him out of the temple; nay, he himself *hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him* with a disease which was, in a particular manner, a token of his displeasure, and which he knew secluded him from common converse with men, much more from the altar of God. He would not be convinced by what the priests said, but God took an effectual course to convince him. If presumptuous men will not be made to see their error by the judgments of God's mouth, they shall be made to see it by the judgments of his hand. It evidenced some religious fear of God in the heart

of this king, even in the midst of his transgression that, as soon as he found God was angry with him, he not only let fall his attempt, but retired with the utmost precipitation. Though he strove with the priests, he would not strive with his Maker.

2. It remained a lasting punishment of his transgression; for he continued a *leper to the day of his death*, shut up in confinement, and shut out from society, and forced to leave it to his son to manage all his business, v. 21. Thus God gave an instance of his resisting the proud, and of his jealousy for the purity and honour of his own institutions: thus he gave fair warning even to great and good men to know and keep their distance, and not to intrude into those things which they have not seen: thus he gave Uzziah a loud and constant call to repentance, and a long space to repent, which we have reason to hope he made a good improvement of. He had been a man of much business in the world, but being taken off from that, and confined to a *several house*, he had leisure to think of another world, and prepare for it. By this judgment upon the king, God intended to possess the people with a great veneration for the temple, the priesthood, and other sacred things, which they had been apt to think meanly of. While the king was a leper, he was as good as dead, dead while he lived, and buried alive; and so the law was, in effect, answered, that the stranger which cometh nigh, shall be put to death. The disgrace survived him; for when he was dead, they would not bury him in the *sepulchres of the kings*, because he was a leper, which stained all his other glory.

3. It was a punishment that answered the sin, as face does to face in a glass. (1.) Pride was at the bottom of his transgression, and thus God humbled him, and put dishonour upon him. (2.) He invaded the office of the priests in contempt of them, and God struck him with a disease, which in a particular manner made him subject to the inspection and sentence of the priests; for to them pertained the *judgment of the leprosy*, Deut. 24. 8. (3.) He thrust himself into the temple of God, whither the priests only had admission, and for that was thrust out of the very courts of the temple, into which the meanest of his subjects that were ceremonially clean, had free access. (4.) He confronted the priests that faced him and opposed his presumption, and for that the leprosy *rose in his forehead*, which, in Miriam's case, is compared to her father's *shitting in her face*, Numb. 12. 14. (5.) He invaded the dignity of the priesthood which he had no right to, and is for that deprived even of his royal dignity which he had a right to. They that covet forbidden honours, forfeit allowed ones. Adam, by catching at the tree of knowledge which he might not eat of, debarred himself from the tree of life which he might have eaten of. Let all that read it say, *The Lord is righteous.*

CHAP. XXVII.

Here is a very short account of the reign of Jotham, a pious prosperous prince, whom one would wish to have known more of, but we may better dispense with the brevity of his story, because that which lengthened the history of the three last kings, was, their degeneracy in their latter end, which we have had a faithful account of; but there was no occasion for such a melancholy conclusion of the history of this reign, which is only an account, I. Of the date and continuance of his reign, v. 1. 8. II. The general good character of it, v. 2, 6. III. The prosperity of it, v. 3. 5. IV. The period of it, v. 7, 9.

1. **JOTHAM** was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the

daughter of Zadok. 2. And he did *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly. 3. He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. 4. Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah: and in the forests he built castles and towers. 5. He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year a hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year and the third. 6. So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God. 7. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 8. He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

There is not much more related here concerning Jotham, than we had before, 2 Kings 15. 32, &c.

1. That he reigned well: he *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*; the course of his reign was good, and pleasing to God, whose favour he made his end, and his word his rule, and (which shows that he acted from a good principle) he *prepared his ways before the Lord his God*, v. 6. that is, He walked circumspectly and with much caution, contrived how to shun that which was evil, and compass that which was good: he looked before him, and cast his affairs into such a posture and method as made the regular management of them more easy. Or, he established or fixed his ways before the Lord, that is, he walked steadily and constantly in the way of his duty, was uniform, and resolute in it; not like some of those that went before him, who, though they had some good in them, lost their credit by their inconstancy, and inconsistency with themselves. They had run well, but something hindered them. It was not so with Jotham.

Two things are observed here in his character:

(1.) What was amiss in his father he amended in himself, v. 2. He did *according to all that his father did* well and wisely; howbeit, he would not imitate him in what he did amiss; for he *entered not into the temple of the Lord* to burn incense as his father did; but took warning by his fate not to dare so presumptuous a thing. Note, We must not imitate the best men, and those we have the greatest veneration for, any further than they did well; but, on the contrary, their falls, and the injurious consequences, must be warnings to us to walk the more circumspectly, that we stumble not at the same stone that they stumbled at.

(2.) What was amiss in his people he could not prevail to amend. *The people yet did corruptly*. Perhaps it reflects some blame upon him, that he was wanting in his part toward the reformation of

the land. Men may be very good themselves, and yet not have courage and zeal to do what they might do toward the reforming of others. However, it certainly reflects a great deal of blame upon the people, that they did not do what they might have done to improve the advantages of so good a reign: they had good instructions given them, and a good example set before them, but they would not be reformed; so that even in the reign of their good kings, as well as the bad ones, they were *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath*; for they still did corruptly, and the Founder melted in vain.

2. That he prospered, and became truly reputable.

(1.) He built. He began with *the gate of the house of the Lord*, which he repaired, beautified and raised. He then *fortified the wall of Ophel, and built cities in the mountains of Judah*, v. 3, 4. took all possible care for the fortifying of his country and the replenishing of it.

(2.) He conquered. Prevailed against the Ammonites, who had invaded Judah in Jehoshaphat's time, ch. 20. 1. He triumphed over them, and exacted great contributions from them, v. 5.

(3.) He became mighty, v. 6. in wealth and power, and influence upon the neighbouring nations, who courted his friendship, and feared his displeasure; and this he got by *preparing his ways before the Lord his God*. The more steadfast we are in religion, the more mighty we are both for the resistance of that which is evil, and for the performance of that which is good.

3. That he finished his course too soon, but finished it with honour; he had the unhappiness to die in the midst of his days; but, to balance that, the happiness not to outlive his reputation, as his 3 last predecessors did. He died when he was but 41 years of age, v. 8. but *his wars and his ways*, his wars abroad and his ways at home, were so glorious, that they were recorded in the book of the kings of Israel, as well as the kings of Judah, v. 7. The last words of the chapter convey the painful intelligence, that *Ahaz his son reigned in his stead*, whose character, in all respects, was the reverse of his. When the wealth and power which wise men have done good with, devolve upon fools that will do hurt with them, it is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

CHAP. XXVIII.

This chapter is the history of the reign of Ahaz the son of Jotham; a bad reign it was, and which helped to augment the fierce anger of the Lord. We have here, I. His great wickedness, v. 1..4. II. The trouble he brought himself into by it, v. 5..8. III. The reproof which God sent by a prophet to the army of Israel for trampling upon their brethren of Judah, and the obedient ear they gave to that reproof, v. 9..15. IV. The many calamities that followed after to Ahaz and his people, v. 16..21. V. The continuance of his idolatry notwithstanding, v. 22..25, and so his story ends, v. 26, 27.

1. **A**H AZ was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: 2. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. 3. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 4. He sacrificed also,

and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. 5. Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought *them* to Damascus; and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

Never surely had a man a greater opportunity of doing well than Ahaz had, finding things in a good posture, the kingdom rich and strong, and religion established; and yet here we have him in these few verses,

1. Wretchedly corrupted and debauched. He had had a good education given him, and a good example set him; but parents cannot give grace to their children: all the instructions he had, were lost upon him, *he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord*, v. 1. nay he did a great deal that was wrong, a wrong to God, to his own soul, and to his people; he walked in the way of the revolted Israelites, and the devoted Canaanites, made molten images, and worshipped them, contrary to the second commandment; nay he made them for Baalim, contrary to the first commandment. He forsook the temple of the Lord, and sacrificed and burnt incense on the hills, as if those would place him nearer heaven; and under every green tree, as if those would signify the protection and influence of heaven by their shade and dropping. To complete his wickedness, as one perfectly divested of all natural affection as well as religion, and perfectly devoted to the service and interest of the great enemy of mankind, *he burnt his children in the fire to Moloch*, v. 3. not thinking it enough to dedicate them to that infernal fiend by causing them to pass through the fire. See what an absolute sway the prince of the power of the air bears among the children of disobedience.

2. Wretchedly spoiled and made a prey of. When he forsook God, and, at a vast expense, put himself under the protection of false gods, God, who, of right, was his God, delivered him into the hands of his enemies, v. 5. (1.) The Syrians insulted him, and triumphed over him, beat him in the field, and carried away a great many of his people into captivity. (2.) The king of Israel, though an idolater too, was made a scourge to him, and *smote him with a great slaughter*. The people suffered by these judgments, their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined; for when they had a good king, though *they did corruptly*, ch. 27. 2. yet then his goodness sheltered them; but now that they had a bad one, all their defence was departed from them, and an inundation of judgments broke in upon them. They that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign, were taught to value it by the miseries of this reign.

6. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, *which were* all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. 7. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah *that was* next to the king. 8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thou-

sand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9. But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name *was* Oded; and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage *that reacheth up unto* heaven. 10. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: *but are there* not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God? 11. Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of God *is* upon you. 12. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shalum, and Amaza the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war. 13. And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD *already*, ye intend to add *more* to our sins and to our trespass; for our trespass is great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel. 14. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. 15. And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

We have here,

I. Treacherous Judah under the rebukes of God's providence, and they are very severe. Never was such bloody work made among them, since they were a kingdom, and by Israelites too. Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and the king of Israel was the instrument God made use of for his punishment. It is just with God to make those our plagues, whom we make our patterns, or make ourselves partners with in sin. A war broke out between Judah and Israel, in which Judah was worsted. For, 1. There was a great slaughter of men in the field of battle; vast numbers; 120,000 men, and valiant men too at other times, were slain, v. 6. and some of the first rank; the king's son for one. He had sacrificed some of his sons to Moloch, justly therefore is this sacrificed to the divine vengeance. Here is another that was *next the king*, his friend, the prime-minister of state, or perhaps next him in the battle, so that the king himself had a narrow escape, v. 7. The kingdom of Israel was not strong at this time, and yet strong enough to bring this great destruction upon Judah. But certainly so many men, great men, stout men, could

not have been cut off in one day, if they had not been strangely dispirited, both by the consciousness of their own guilt, and by the righteous hand of God upon them. Even valiant men were numbered as *sheep for the slaughter*, and became an easy prey to the enemy, *because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, and he had therefore forsaken them. 2. There was a great captivity of *women and children*, v. 8. When the army in the field was routed, the cities, and towns, and country-villages, were all easily stripped, the inhabitants taken for slaves, and their wealth for a prey.

II. Even victorious Israel under the rebukes of God's word, for the bad principle they had gone upon in making war with Judah, and the bad use they made of their success; and the good effect of this rebuke. Here is,

1. The message which God sent them by a prophet, who went out to meet them, not to applaud their valour, or congratulate them on their victory, though they returned laden with spoils and triumphs, but in God's name to tell them of their faults, and warn them of the judgments of God.

(1.) He tells them how they came by this victory of which they were so proud; it was not because God favoured them, or that they had merited it at his hand, but *because he was wroth with Judah*, and made them the rod of his indignation. *Not for your righteousness*, be it known to you, but *for their wickedness*, (Deut. 9. 5.) *they are broken off*; therefore *be not ye high-minded, but fear, lest God also spare not you*, Rom. 11. 20, 21.

(2.) He charges them with the abuse of the power God had given them over their brethren. They understand not what victory is, who think it gives them authority to do what they will, and that the longest sword is the clearest claim to lives and estates; (*Jusque datum sceleri—Might is right*;) no, as it is impolitic not to use a victory, so it is impious to abuse it. The conquerors are here reproved, [1.] For the cruelty of the slaughter they had made in the field. They had indeed *shed the blood of war, in war*; we suppose that to be lawful, but it turned into sin to them, because they did it from a bad principle of enmity to their brethren, and after a bad manner, with a barbarous fury, *a rage reaching up to heaven*, that is, that cries to God for vengeance against such bloody men, that delighted in military execution. They that serve God's justice, if they do it with rage and a spirit of revenge, make themselves obnoxious to it, and forfeit the honour of acting for him: *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. [2.] For the imperious treatment they gave their prisoners. "*Ye now purpose to keep them under*, to use them or sell them as slaves, though they are your brethren and free-born Israelites." God takes notice of what men purpose, as well as what they say and do.

(3.) He reminds them of their own sins, by which they also were obnoxious to the wrath of God. *Are they not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* He appeals to their own consciences, and to the notorious evidence of the thing. "Though you are now made the instruments of correcting Judah for sin, yet do not think that you are therefore innocent yourselves; no, you also are guilty before God." This is intended as a check, [1.] To their triumph in their success; "You are sinners, and it ill becomes sinners to be proud; you have carried the day now, but be not secure, the wheel may ere long return upon yourselves, for if judgment begin thus with those that have the *house of God* among them, what shall be the end of such as worship the calves?" [2.] To their severity toward their brethren; "You have now got them under, but you ought to show mercy

to them, for you yourselves are undone if you do not find mercy with God. It ill becomes sinners to be cruel. You have transgressions enough to answer for already, and need not add this to the rest."

(4.) He commands them to release the prisoners, and to send them home again carefully, v. 11. for, you having sinned, *the fierce wrath of God is upon you*, and there is no other way of escaping it than by showing mercy.

2. The resolution of the princes, thereupon, not to detain the prisoners. They *stood up against them that came from the war*, though flushed with victory, and told them, plainly, that they should not bring their captives to Samaria, v. 12, 13. They had sin enough already to answer for, and would have nothing done to add to their trespass. In this they discovered an obedient regard to the word of God by his prophet, and a tender compassion toward their brethren, which was wrought in them by the tender mercy of God; for he regarded the affliction of this poor people, and heard their cry, and *made them to be pitied of all them that carried them captives*, Ps. 106. 44, 46.

3. The compliance of the soldiers with the resolution of the princes in this matter, and the dismissal of the captives thereupon. (1.) The armed men, though, being armed, they might by force have maintained their title to what they got by the sword, acquiesced, and left their captives and the spoil to the disposal of the *princes*, v. 14. and herein they showed a more true heroic bravery than they did in taking them. It is a great honour for any man to yield to the authority of reason and religion against his interest. (2.) The princes very generously sent home the poor captives well accommodated, v. 15. Those that hope to find mercy with God, must learn hence with what tenderness to carry themselves toward those that lie at their mercy. It is strange that these princes, who, in this instance, discovered such a deference to the word of God, and such an influence upon the people, had not so much grace, as, in obedience to the calls of God by so many prophets, to root idolatry out of their kingdom, which, soon after this, was the ruin of it.

16. At that time did king Abaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. 18. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederot, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof; Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. 19. For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Abaz king of Israel: for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. 20. And Tilgath pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. 21. For Abaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. 22. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Abaz. 23. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote

him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, *therefore* will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. 24. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. 26. Now the rest of his acts, and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, *even* in Jerusalem; but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is,

I. The great distress which the kingdom of Ahaz, was reduced to for his sin. In general, 1. *The Lord brought Judah low*, v. 19. They had lately been very high in wealth, and power; but God found means to take them down, and make them as despicable as they had been formidable. They that will not humble themselves and fear the word of God, will justly be humbled by his judgments. *Iniquity brings men low*, Ps. 106. 43. 2. Ahaz made Judah naked. As his sin debased them, so it exposed them. It made them naked to their *shame*; for it exposed them to contempt, as a man unclothed. It made them naked to their *danger*; for it exposed them to assaults, as a man unarmed, Exod. 32. 25. Sin strips men. In particular, the Edomites, to be revenged for Amariah's cruel treatment of them, *ch.* 25. smote Judah, and carried off many captives, v. 17. The Philistines also insulted them, took and kept possession of several cities and villages that lay near them, v. 18. and so they were revenged for the incursions which Uzziah had made upon them, *ch.* 26. 6. And, to show that it was purely the sin of Ahaz that brought the Philistines upon his country, in the very year that he died, the prophet Isaiah foretold the destruction of the Philistines by his son, Isa. 14. 28, 29.

II. The addition which Ahaz made both to the national distress, and the national guilt.

1. He added to the distress, by making court to strange kings, in hopes they would relieve him. When the Edomites and Philistines were vexatious to him, *he sent to the kings of Assyria to help him*, v. 16. for he found his own kingdom weakened and made naked, and he could not put any confidence in God, therefore was at a vast expense to get an interest in the king of Assyria. He pillaged the house of God, and the king's house, and squeezed the princes for money to hire these foreign forces into his service, v. 21. Though he had conformed to the idolatry of the heathen nations, his neighbours, they did not value him for that, nor love him the better, nor did his compliance, by which he lost God, gain them, nor could he make any interest in them but with his money. It is often found that wicked men themselves have no real affection for those that revolt to them, nor do they care to do them a kindness. A degenerate branch is looked upon, on all sides, as *an abominable branch*, Isa. 14.

19. But what did Ahaz get by the king of Assyria? Why, *he came to him*, but he distressed him, and strengthened him not, v. 20. helped him not, v. 21. The forces of the Assyrian quartered upon his country, and so impoverished and weakened it; they grew insolent and imperious, and created him a great deal of vexation, like a broken reed, which not only fails, but pierces the hand.

2. He added to the guilt, by making court to strange gods, in hopes they would relieve him. In his distress, instead of repenting of his idolatry, which he had reason enough to see the folly of, *he trespassed yet more*, v. 22. was more mad than ever upon his idols: a brand of infamy is here set upon him for it. *This is that king Ahaz*, that wretched man, who was the scandal of the house of David, and the curse and plague of his generation. Note, Those are wicked and vile indeed, that are made worse by their afflictions, instead of being made better by them; who, *in their distress, trespass yet more*, have their corruptions exasperated by that which should mollify them, and their hearts more *fully set in them to do evil*. Let us see what his trespass was. (1.) He abused the house of God; for he cut in pieces the vessels of it, that the priests might not perform the service of the temple, or not as it should be, for want of vessels; and, at length, *shut up the doors*, that the people might not attend it, v. 24. This was worse than the worst of the kings before him had done. (2.) He confronted the altar of God, for he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem; so that, as the prophet speaks, they were like *heaps in the furrows of the field*, Hos. 12. 11. And in the cities of Judah, either by his power, or by his purse, or by both, he erected high places for the people to burn incense to what idol they pleased, as if on purpose to *provoke the god of his fathers*, v. 25. (3.) He cast off God himself; for he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, v. 23. not because he loved them, for he thought they smote him; but because he feared them, thinking that they helped his enemies, and that if he could bring them into his interest, they would help him. Foolish man! It was his own God that smote him, and strengthened the Syrians against him, not the gods of Damascus; had he sacrificed to him, and to him only, he would have helped him. But no marvel that men's affections and devotions are misplaced, when they mistake the author of their trouble and their help. And what comes of it? The gods of Syria befriend Ahaz no more than the kings of Assyria did; they were the ruin of him, and all Israel. This sin provoked God to bring judgments upon them, to cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but 36 years old; and it debauched the people so, that the reformation of the next reign could not prevail to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, but they retained that root of bitterness till the captivity in Babylon plucked it up.

The chapter concludes with the conclusion of the reign of Ahaz, v. 26, 27. For aught that appears, he died impenitent, and therefore died inglorious; for he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings. Justly was he thought unworthy to be laid among them, who was so unlike them; to be buried with kings, who had used his kingly power for the destruction of the church, and not for its protection or edification.

• CHAP. XXIX.

We are here entering upon a pleasant scene, the good and glorious reign of Hezekiah; in which we shall find more of God and religion, than, perhaps, in any of the good reigns we have yet met with, for he was a very zealous, devout, good man, none like him. In this chapter, we have an account of the work of reformation which he

set about with vigour, immediately after his accession to the crown. Here is, I. His exhortation to the priests and Levites, when he put them in possession of the house of God again, v. 1.-11. II. The care and pains which the Levites took to cleanse the temple, and put things into order there, v. 12.-19. III. A solemn revival of God's ordinances that had been neglected, in which atonement was made for the sins of the last reign, and the wheels set a-going again, to the great satisfaction of king and people, v. 20.-36.

I. **HEZEKIAH** began to reign *when he was* five and twenty years old; and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2. And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. 3. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. 4. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, 5. And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites; Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6. For our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned *their backs*. 7. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burnt incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the God of Israel. 8. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. 9. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives, *are* in captivity for this. 10. Now *it is* in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11. My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that you should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Here is,

I. Hezekiah's age when he came to the crown; he was *25 years old*. Joash, who came to the crown after two bad reigns, was but 7 years old; Josiah, who came after two bad reigns, was but 8; which occasioned the delay of the reformation. But Hezekiah was come to years, and so applied himself immediately to it. We may well think with what a sorrowful heart he beheld his father's idolatry and profaneness, how it troubled him to see the doors of the temple shut up, though, while his father lived, he durst not open them. His soul no doubt, wept in secret for it, and he vowed, that when he should receive the congregation, he would redress these grievances, which made him do it with more readiness and resolution.

II. His general character. He *did that which was right, like David*, v. 2. Of several of his predecessors it had been said that they did that which was right, *but not like David*, not with David's integrity and zeal. But here was one that had as hearty an affection for the ark and law of God as ever David had.

III. His speedy application to the great work of restoring religion. The first thing he did, was, *to open the doors of the house of the Lord*, v. 3. We are willing to hope his father had not quite suppressed the temple-service; for then the holy fire on the altar must have gone out, which we do not read of the rekindling of: but he had hindered the people from attending it, and the priests, except such of them as were of his own party, 2 Kings 16. 15. But Hezekiah immediately threw the church doors open, and *brought in the priests and Levites*. He found Judah low and naked, yet he did not make it his first business to revive the civil interests of his kingdom, but to restore religion to its good posture again. Those that begin with God, begin at the right end of their work, and it will prosper accordingly.

IV. His speech to the priests and Levites. It was well known, no doubt, that he had a real kindness for religion, and was disaffected to the corruptions of the last reign; yet we do not find the priests and Levites addressing themselves to him for the restoration of the temple-service, but he calls upon them; which, I doubt, bespeaks their coldness as much as his zeal; and perhaps, if they had done their part with vigour, things had not been brought into so very bad a posture as Hezekiah found them in.

Hezekiah's exhortation to the Levites is very pathetic.

I. He lays before them the desolation of religion, and the deplorable state to which it was brought among them, v. 6, 7. *Our fathers have trespassed*. He said not, *my father*, because it became him, as a son, to be as tender as might be of his father's name, and because his father would not have done all this, if their fathers had not neglected their duty. Urijah the priest had joined with Ahaz in setting up an idolatrous altar. He complains, (1.) That the house of God had been deserted; *They have forsaken God, and turned their backs upon his habitation*. Note, Those that turn their backs upon God's ordinances, may truly be said to forsake God himself. (2.) That the instituted worship of God there had been let fall; the lamps were not lighted, incense was not burnt; there are still such neglects as these, and they are no less culpable, if the word be not duly read and opened, for that was signified by the *lighting of the lamps*, and if prayers and praises be not duly offered up, for that was signified by the *burning of incense*.

2. He shows the sad consequences of the neglect and decay of religion among them, v. 8, 9. This was the cause of all the calamities they had lain under; God had, in anger, delivered them to trouble, to the sword, and to captivity. When we are under the rebukes of God's providence, it is good for us to inquire whether we have not neglected God's ordinances, and whether that be not the controversy he has with us.

3. He declares his own full purpose and resolution to revive religion, and make it his business to promote it, v. 10. *It is in my heart*, that is, "I am fully resolved to *make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel*," that is, "to worship him only, and in that way which he has appointed; for I am sure that, otherwise, his fierce anger will not turn away from us." This covenant he would not only make himself, but bring his people into the bond of.

4. He engages and excites the Levites and priests to do their duty on this occasion. This he begins

with, *v.* 5. this he ends with, *v.* 11. calls them *Levites*, to remind them of their obligation to God, calls them his *sons*, to remind them of their relation to himself, that he expected that, *as a son with the father, they should serve with him* in the reformation of the land. (1.) He tells them what was their duty; to sanctify *themselves first*, by repenting of their neglects, reforming their own hearts and lives, and renewing their covenants with God, to do their duty better for the time to come; and then to *sanctify the house of God*, as his servants, to make it clean from every thing that was disagreeable, either through the disuse or the profanation of it, and to set it up for the purposes for which it was made. (2.) He stirs them up to it, (*v.* 11.) "*Be not negligent, or remiss, in your duty. Let not this good work be retarded through your carelessness.*" *Be not deceived*, so the margin. They that by their negligence in the service of God, think to mock God, and put a cheat upon him, do but deceive themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls. *Be not secure*, so some, as if there were no urgent call to do it, or no danger in not doing it. Men's negligence in religion is owing to their carnal security. The consideration he quickens them with, is, their office. God had herein put honour upon them; he has *chosen you to stand before him*. God expected work from them; they were not chosen to be idle, to enjoy the dignity, and leave the duty to be done by others, but to serve him, and to minister to him. They must therefore be ashamed of their late remissness, and now that the doors of the temple were opened again, set about their work with double diligence.

12. Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari; Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah: 13. And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah: 14. And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel. 15. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. 16. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. 17. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. 18. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the show-

bread table, with all the vessels thereof. 19. Moreover, all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

We have here busy work, good work, and needful work, the cleansing of the house of the Lord.

1. The persons employed in this work were the priests and Levites, who should have *kept* it clean, but, not having done that, were concerned to *make* it clean. Several of the Levites are here named; two of each of the three principal houses, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari, *v.* 12. And two of each of the three families of singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, *v.* 13. We cannot think these are named merely because they were chief in place, for then surely the High Priest, or some of the heads of the courses of the priests, would have been mentioned; but because they were more zealous and active than the rest. When God has work to do, he will raise up leading men to preside in it. And it is not always that the first in place and rank are most fit for service, or most forward to it. These Levites not only bestirred themselves but *gathered their brethren*, and quickened them to do according to the commandment of the king by the words of the LORD. Observe, They did according to the king's command, but with an eye to God's word; the king commanded them what was already their duty by the word of God, and, in doing it, they regarded God's word as a rule to them, and the king's commandment as a spur to them.

2. The work was *cleansing the house of God*, (1.) From the common dirt it had contracted while it was shut up, dust and cobwebs, and the rust of the vessels; (2.) From the idols and idolatrous altars that were set up in it, which, though kept ever so neat, were a greater pollution to it than if it had been made the common sewer of the city. The priests were none of them mentioned as leading men in this work, yet none but they durst go *into the inner part of the house, no not to cleanse it*, which they did, and, perhaps, the High Priest into the Holy of Holies, to cleanse that. And though the Levites had the honour to be the leaders in the work, they did not disdain to be servitors to the priests according to their office; for what filth the priests brought into the court, the Levites carried to the brook Kidron. Let not men's usefulness, be it ever so eminent, make them forget their place.

3. The expedition with which they did this work, was very remarkable. They began on the first day of the first month, a happy beginning of the new-year, and that promised a good year; thus should every year begin with the reformation of what is amiss, and the purging away, by repentance, of all the defilements contracted the foregoing year. In eight days they cleared and cleansed the temple, and in eight days more the courts of the temple, *v.* 17. Let those that do good work, learn to rid work and get it done. Let what is amiss, be amended quickly.

4. The report they made of it to Hezekiah, was very agreeable, *v.* 18, 19. They gave him an account of what they had done, because it was he that set them on work, boasted not of their own care and pains, nor did they come to him to be paid, but to let him know that all the things that had been profaned, were now sanctified according to law, and were ready to be used again whenever he pleased. They knew the good king had set his heart upon God's altar, and longed to be attending that, and therefore they insisted most upon the readiness they had put that into; that the ves-

sels of the altar were scoured and brightened; those which Ahaz in his *transgressions*, had *cast away*, as vessels in which there was no pleasure, those they gathered together, sanctified them, and laid them in their place *before the altar*. Though the vessels of the sanctuary may be profaned for a while, God will find a time and way to sanctify them. Neither his ordinances, nor his people, shall be suffered to fail for ever.

20. Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. 21. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah: and he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD. 22. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. 23. And they brought forth the he-goats *for* the sin-offering before the king and the congregation; and laid their hands upon them: 24. And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel; for the king commanded, *that* the burnt-offering and the sin-offering *should be made* for all Israel. 25. And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for *so was* the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. 26. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David king of Israel. 28. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and all this continued* until the burnt-offering was finished. 29. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all *that were* present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. 30. Moreover, Hezekiah the king, and the princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. 31. Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices

and thank-offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank-offerings; and as many as were of a free heart, burnt-offerings. 32. And the number of the burnt-offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, a hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs: all these *were* for a burnt-offering to the LORD. 33. And the consecrated things *were* six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. 34. But the priests were too few, so that they could not slay all the burnt-offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites *were* more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. 35. And also the burnt-offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings for *every* burnt-offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. 36. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was *done* suddenly.

The temple being cleansed, we have here an account of the good use that was immediately made of it. A solemn assembly was called to meet the king at the temple, the very next day; (*v.* 20.) and very glad, no doubt, all the good people in Jerusalem were, when it was said, *Let us go in to the house of the Lord*, Ps. 122. 1. As soon as Hezekiah heard that the temple was ready for him, he lost no time, but made it appear that he was ready for it. He rose early to go up to the house of the Lord, earlier on that day than on other days, to show that his heart was upon his work there.

Now this day's work was to look two ways;

1. Atonement must be made for the sins of the last reign. They thought it not enough to lament and forsake those sins, but they brought a sin-offering. Even our repentance and reformation will not obtain pardon but in and through Christ, who was made *sin*, that is, a *sin-offering*, for us. No peace but through his blood, not for penitents.

Observe,

1. The sin-offering was *for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and for Judah*, (*v.* 21.) that is, to make atonement for the sins of princes, priests, and people, for they had all corrupted their way. The law of Moses appointed sacrifices to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation, (*Lev.* 4. 13, 14. *Numb.* 15. 24, 25.) that the national judgments which their national sins deserved, might be turned away: for this, we must now have an eye to Christ the great Propitiation, as well as for the remission and salvation of particular persons.

2. The law appointed only one goat for a sin-offering, as on the day of atonement, (*Lev.* 16. 15.) and on such extraordinary occasions as this, *Numb.* 15. 24. But they here offered seven, (*v.* 21.) because the sins of the congregation had been very great, and long continued in. Seven is a number of perfection: our great sin-offering is but one, yet that one *perfects* for ever *them that are sanctified*.

3. The king and congregation (that is, the representatives of the congregation) *laid their hands on the heads of the goats* that were for the *sin-offering*, (*v.* 25.) thereby owning themselves guilty *before*

God, and expressing their desire that the guilt of the sinner might be transferred upon the sacrifice. By faith we lay our hands on the Lord Jesus, and so receive the atonement, Rom. 5. 11.

4. Burnt-offerings were offered with the sin-offerings, *seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs*. The intention of the burnt-offerings was to give glory to the God of Israel, whom they own as the only true God, which it was proper to do at the same time that they were by the sin-offering making atonement for their offences. The blood of those, as well as of the sin-offering, was *sprinkled upon the altar*, (v. 22.) to make reconciliation for all Israel, (v. 24.) and not for Judah only; Christ is a Propitiation not for the sins of Israel only, but of the whole world, 1 John 2. 1, 2.

5. While the offerings were burning upon the altar, the Levites sang the song of the Lord, (v. 27.) the Psalms composed by David and Asaph, (v. 30.) with the musical instruments which God by his prophets had commanded the use of, (v. 25.) and which had been long neglected. Even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. By faith we must rejoice in Christ Jesus as our righteousness; and our prayers and praises must ascend with his offering, to be accepted only in the virtue of it.

6. The king and all the congregation testified their consent to, and concurrence in, all that was done, by *bowing their heads and worshipping*; expressing an awful veneration of the Divine Majesty, by postures of adoration. This is taken notice of, v. 28-30. It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if we do not ourselves worship him, and that, not with bodily exercise only, which profits little, but with the heart.

II. The solemnities of this day did likewise look forward: the temple-service was to be set up again, that it might be continually kept up; and this Hezekiah calls them to, v. 31. "Now that ye have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, have both made an atonement and made a covenant by sacrifice, are solemnly reconciled and engaged to him; now come near and bring sacrifices." Note, Our covenant with God must be pursued and improved in communion with him. Having consecrated ourselves, in the first place, to the Lord, we must bring the sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, to his house. Now, in this work, it was found,

1. That the people were free. Being called to it by the king, they brought in their offerings, though not in such abundance as in the glorious days of Solomon, (for Judah was now diminished, impoverished, and brought low,) but according to what they had, and as much as one could expect, considering their poverty and the great decay of piety among them. (1.) Some were so generous as to bring burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no part; of this sort there were 70 bullocks, 100 rams, and 200 lambs, v. 32. (2.) Others brought peace-offerings and thank-offerings, the fat of which was burnt upon the altar, and the flesh divided between the priests and the offerers; (v. 35.) of this sort there were 600 oxen and 3000 sheep, v. 33. Perhaps the remembrance of their sin, in sacrificing on the high places, made them more willing to bring their sacrifices now to God's altar.

2. That the priests were few, too few for the service, v. 34. Many of them, it is likely, were suspended and laid aside as polluted and uncanonical, for having sacrificed to idols in the last reign, and the rest had not the zeal that one might have expected upon such an occasion; they thought that the king needed not to be so forward, that there was no such necessity for haste in opening the doors of the temple, and therefore took no care to sanctify them-

selves, and, being unsanctified, and so unqualified, they made that their excuse for being absent from the service; as if their offence would be their defence. It is recorded here, to the perpetual shame of the priests, that though they were so well provided for out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, yet they did not mind their business! here was work to do, and there wanted proper hands to do it.

3. That the Levites were forward. They had been more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests, (v. 34.) were better affected to the work, and better prepared and qualified for it; this was their praise, and, in recompense for it, they had the honour to be employed in that which was the priests' work; they helped them to slay the offerings. This was not according to the law, (Lev. 1. 5, 6.) but the irregularity was dispensed with in cases of necessity, and thus encouragement was given to the faithful zealous Levites, and a just disgrace put upon the careless priests. What the Levites wanted in the ceremonial advantages of their birth and consecration, was abundantly made up in their eminent qualifications of skill and will to do the work.

4. That all were pleased. The king and all the people rejoiced in this blessed turn of affairs, and the new face of religion which the kingdom had put on, v. 36. Two things in this matter pleased them. (1.) That it was soon brought about; *the thing was done suddenly*, in a little time, with a great deal of ease, and without any opposition. Those that go about the work of God in faith and with resolution, will find that there is not that difficulty in it, which they sometimes imagine, but it will be a pleasing surprise to them to see how soon it is done. (2.) That the hand of God was plainly in it; *God had prepared the people* by the secret influences of his grace, so that many of those who had in the last reign doted on the idolatrous altars, were now as much in love with God's altar. This change which God wrought on their minds, did very much expedite and facilitate the work. Let magistrates and ministers do their part toward the reforming of a land, and then let them trust God to do his, and ascribe to him the glory of what is done, especially when it is done suddenly, and is a pleasing surprise. *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous.*

CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter, we have an account of the solemn passover which Hezekiah kept in the first year of his reign. I. The consultation about it, and the resolution he and his people came to for the observance of it, v. 2-5. II. The invitation he sent to Judah and Israel to come and keep it, v. 1, 6-12. III. The joyful celebration of it, v. 13-27. By this, the reformation, set on foot in the foregoing chapter, was greatly advanced, and that nail in God's holy place, clenched.

1. **AND** Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. 2. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 3. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. 4. And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation. 5. So they established a decree, to make

proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem; for they had not done *it* of a long time in such sort as it was written. 6. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, *who*, therefore, gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers *were*, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. 9. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his* face from you, if ye return unto him. 10. So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. 11. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. 12. Also in Judah, the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

Here is,

I. A passover resolved upon. The annual feast was instituted as a memorial of the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt; it happened that the reviving of the temple-service fell within the appointed days of that feast, the 17th day of the 1st month; this brought that forgotten solemnity to mind; "What shall we do," says Hezekiah, "about the passover? It is a very comfortable ordinance, and has been long neglected; how shall we revive that? The time is lapsed, for this year; we cannot go about it immediately, the congregation is thin, the people have not got notice, the priests are not prepared, *v.* 3. Must we defer it till another year?" Many, it is likely, were for deferring it; but Hezekiah considered that by that time twelvemonth, the good affections of the people would cool, and it would be too long to want the benefit of the ordinance; and therefore, finding a proviso in the law of Moses, that particular persons who were unclean in the first month, might keep the passover the 14th day of the second month, and be accepted, (Numb. 9. 11.) he doubted not but that it might be extended to the congregation. Whereupon, they resolved to keep the passover in the 2d month. Let

the circumstance give way to the substance, and let not the thing itself be lost upon a nicety about the time. It is good striking while the iron is hot, and taking people when they are in a good mind. Delays are dangerous.

II. A proclamation issued out to give notice of this passover, and to summon the people to it.

1. An invitation was sent to the ten revolted tribes to stir them up to come, and attend this solemnity. Letters were written to Ephraim and Manasseh to invite them to Jerusalem to keep this passover, (*v.* 1.) not with any politic design, to bring them back to the house of David, but with a pious design to bring them back to the LORD God of Israel; "Let them take whom they will for their king," says Hezekiah, "so they will but take him for their God." The matters in difference between Judah and Israel, either upon a civil or sacred account, shall not hinder, but that if the people of Israel will sincerely return to the LORD their God, Hezekiah will bid them as welcome to the passover as any of his own subjects. Expresses are sent post throughout all the tribes of Israel, with memorials earnestly pressing the people to take this opportunity of returning to the God from whom they had revolted. Now here we have,

(1.) The contents of the circular letters that were despatched away upon this occasion, in which Hezekiah discovers a great concern both for the honour of God, and for the welfare of the neighbouring kingdom, the prosperity of which he seems passionately desirous of, though he not only received no toll, tribute, or custom, from it, but it had often, and not long since, been vexatious to his kingdom. This is rendering good for evil.

Observe, [1.] What it is, which he presses them to, (*v.* 8.) "*Yield yourselves unto the Lord.* Before you can come into communion with him, you must come into covenant with him." *Give the hand to the Lord*; so the word is, that is, "Consent to take him for your God: a bargain is confirmed by giving the hand; Strike this bargain. Join yourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. *Subscribe with the hand* to be his, Isa. 44. 5. Give him your hand in token of giving him your heart; lay your hand to his plough; devote yourselves to his service, to work for him. *Yield to him*," that is, "Come up to his terms; come under his government; stand it not out any longer against him. *Yield to him*, to be absolutely and universally at his command, at his disposal; to be, and do, and have, and suffer, whatever he pleases. In order to this, be not *stiff-necked* as your fathers were; let not your corrupt and wicked wills rise up in rebellion against the will of God. Say not that you will do what you please, but resolve to do what he pleases." We perceive in the carnal mind a stiffness and obstinacy, an unaptness to comply with God; we have it from our fathers, it is bred in the bone with us; this must be conquered; and the will that had in it a spirit of contradiction, must be melted into the will of God; and to his yoke the neck that was an iron sinew, must be bowed and fitted. In pursuance of this resignation to God, he presses them *to enter into the sanctuary*, that is, to attend upon him in that place which he had chosen to put his name there, and serve him in the ordinances which he had appointed. "The doors of the sanctuary are now opened, and you have liberty to enter; the temple-service is now revived, and you are welcome to join in it." The king says, *Come*; the princes and priests say, *Come, whoever will let him come*. This he calls, (*v.* 6.) *turning to the Lord God*; for they had forsaken him, and worshipped other gods; *Repent now and be converted*. Thus they who through grace have turned to God themselves, should do all they can to bring others back to him.

[2.] What arguments he uses to persuade them to do this. *First*, "You are children of Israel, and therefore stand related, stand obliged, to the God of Israel, from whom you are revolted." *Secondly*, "The God you are called to return to, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God in covenant with your first fathers, who served him and yielded themselves to him; and it was their honour and happiness." *Thirdly*, "Your late fathers that forsook him and trespassed against him, have been given up to desolation; their apostasy and idolatry have been their ruin, as you see; (v. 7.) let their harms be your warnings." *Fourthly*, "You yourselves are but a remnant narrowly escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria, (v. 6.) and therefore are concerned to put yourselves under the protection of the God of your fathers, that you be not quite swallowed up." *Fifthly*, "This is the only way of turning away the fierceness of God's anger from you, (v. 8.) which will certainly consume you, if you continue stiff-necked." *Lastly*, "If you return to God in a way of duty, he will return to you in a way of mercy." This he begins with, v. 6. and concludes with, v. 9. In general, "You will find him gracious and merciful, and one that will not turn away his face from you, if you seek him, notwithstanding the provocations you have given him." Particularly, "You may hope that he will turn again the captivity of your brethren that are carried away, and bring them back to their own land." Could any thing be expressed more pathetically, more movingly? Could there be a better cause, and better pleaded?

(2.) The entertainment which Hezekiah's messengers and message met with. It does not appear that Hoshea, who was now king of Israel, took any umbrage from, or gave any opposition to, the dispersing of these proclamations through his kingdom, nor that he forbade his subjects to accept the invitation; he seems to have left them entirely to their liberty, they might go to Jerusalem to worship if they pleased; for though he did evil, yet not like the kings of Israel that were before him, 2 Kings 17. 2. He saw ruin coming upon his kingdom, and if any of his subjects would try this expedient to prevent it, they had his full permission. But, for the people,

[1.] The generality of them slighted the call, and turned a deaf ear to it. The messengers went from city to city, some to one, and some to another, and used pressing entreaties with the people to come up to Jerusalem to keep the passover; but they were so far from complying with the message, that they abused them that brought it, *laughed them to scorn, and mocked them*, (v. 10.) not only refused, but refused with disdain. Tell them of the God of Abraham, they knew him not, they had other gods to serve, Baal and Ashtoreth; tell them of the sanctuary, their high places were as good; of God's mercy and wrath, they neither dreaded the one, nor desired the other. No marvel that the king's messengers were thus despitefully used by this apostate race, when God's messengers were so, his servants the prophets who produced credentials from him. The destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was now at hand; it was but two or three years after this, that the king of Assyria laid siege to Samaria, which ended in the captivity of those tribes: just before this, they had not only a king of their own that permitted them to return to God's sanctuary, but a king of Judah that earnestly invited them to do it; had they generally accepted this invitation, it might have prevented their ruin; but their contempt of it hastened and aggravated it, and left them inexorable.

[2.] Yet there was some few that accepted the invitation. The message, though to some it was a

savour of death unto death, was to others a savour of life unto life, v. 11. In the worst of times, God has had a remnant; so he had here, divers of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, (here is no mention of any out of Ephraim,*) *humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem*, that is, were sorry for their sins, and submitted to God. Pride keeps men from yielding themselves to the Lord; when that is brought down, the work is done.

2. A command was given to the men of Judah to attend this solemnity; and they universally obeyed it, v. 12. They did it with one heart, were all of a mind in it, and the hand of God gave them that one heart; for it is in the day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing. It is God that works both to will and to do. When people, at any time, discover an unexpected forwardness to that which is good, we must acknowledge the hand of God in it.

13. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. 14. And they arose, and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt-offerings into the house of the Lord. 16. And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites: 17. For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified; therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord. 18. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written: but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one. 19. That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

The time appointed for the passover is now come, and a very great congregation came together upon this occasion, v. 13. Now here we have,

I. The preparation they made for the passover: it was good preparation: they took away all the idolatrous altars that were found, not only in the temple, but in Jerusalem, v. 14. Before they kept the feast, they cast out this old leaven. The best preparation we can make for the gospel passover, is, to cast away our iniquities, our spiritual idolatries.

II. The celebration of the passover; in this the people were so forward and zealous, that the priests

* But see the eighteenth verse.—I'p

and Levites blushed to see themselves outdone by the commonalty, to see them more ready to bring sacrifices, than they were to offer them. This put them upon sanctifying themselves, (v. 15.) that the work might not stand still for want of hands to carry it on. The notice we take of the zeal of others, should make us ashamed of our own coldness, and quicken us not only to do our duty, but to do it well, and to sanctify ourselves to it. They did according to the duty of their place, (v. 16.) sprinkling the blood upon the altar, which was a type of Christ our Passover sacrificed for us.

III. The irregularities they were guilty of in this solemnity. The substance was well managed, and with a great deal of devotion; but beside being a month out of time, 1. The Levites killed the passover, which should have been done by the priests only, v. 17. They also assisted, more than the law ordinarily allowed, in offering the other sacrifices, particularly those that were for the purifying of the unclean, many of which there was now occasion for. Some think that it was the officers' work, not the priests', that the Levites had here the charge of. Ordinarily, every man killed his lamb, but now for those that were under any ceremonial pollution the Levites did it. 2. Many were permitted to eat the passover, who were not purified according to the strictness of the law, v. 18. This was the second month, and there was no warrant to put them off further to the third month, as, if it had been the first month, the law had permitted them to eat it the second. And they were loath to forbid them communicating at all, lest they should discourage new converts, and send them away complaining, whom they desired to send away rejoicing. Grotius observes from this, that ritual institutions must give way, not only to a public necessity, but to a public benefit and advantage.

IV. Hezekiah's prayer to God for the forgiveness of this irregularity. It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that any should fare the worse for being straitened of time in their preparation: he therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that ate the passover, otherwise than it was written, that there might not be wrath upon them from the Lord. His prayer was,

1. A short prayer, but to the purpose. *The good Lord pardon every one in the congregation that has fixed, engaged, or prepared, his heart to those services, though the ceremonial preparation be wanting.* Note, (1.) The great thing required in our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances, is that we *fire* our hearts to seek him; that we be sincere and upright in all we do, that the inward man be engaged and employed in it, and that we make heart-work of it; it is all nothing without this. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part.* Hezekiah does not pray that this might be dispensed with, nor that the want of other things might be pardoned where there was not this; for *this* is the one thing needful, that we seek God, his favour, his honour, and that we set our hearts to do it. (2.) Where this sincerity and fixedness of heart are, yet there may be many defects and infirmities, both the frame of the spirit, and the performance of the service, short of the purification of the sanctuary. Corruptions may not be so fully conquered, thoughts not so closely fixed, affections not so lively, faith not so operative, as they should be; here is a defect in sanctuary-purification. There is nothing perfect under the sun, nor a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not. (3.) These defects need pardoning, healing, grace; for omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions of duty. If God should deal with us in strict justice according to the best of our performances, we are undone. (4.) The way to obtain

pardon for our deficiencies in duty, and all the iniquities of our holy things, is, to seek it of God by prayer; it is not so a pardon of course, but that it must be obtained by petition through the blood of Christ. (5.) In this prayer, we must take encouragement from the goodness of God. *The good Lord pardon;* for when he proclaimed his goodness, he insisted most upon this breach of it, *forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.* (6.) It is the duty of those that have the charge of others, not only to look to themselves, but to those also that are under their charge, to see wherein they are wanting, and to pray for them; as Hezekiah here. See Job 1. 5.

2. A successful prayer. *The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah,* was well pleased with his pious concern for the congregation, and, in answer to his prayer, *healed the people,* (v. 20.) not only did not lay their sin to their charge, but graciously accepted their services notwithstanding; for healing denotes not only forgiveness, Isa. 6. 10. Ps. 103. 3. but comfort and peace, Isa. 57. 18. Mal. 4. 2.

21. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. 22. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. 23. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness. 24. For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep: and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26. So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. 27. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

After the passover followed the feast of unleavened bread, which continued seven days. How that was observed, we are here told, and every thing in this account looks pleasant and lively.

I. Abundance of sacrifices were offered to God in peace-offerings, by which they both acknowledged and implored the favour of God, and on part of which the offerers feasted with their friends during these seven days, (a. 22.) in token of their communion with God, and the comfort they took in his

favour, and their reconciliation to him. To keep up this part of the service, that God's altar might be abundantly regaled with the fat and blood, and his priests and his people with the flesh, of the peace-offerings, Hezekiah gave out of his own stock 1000 bullocks, and 7000 sheep; and the princes, excited by his pious example, gave the same number of bullocks, and a greater number of sheep, and all for peace-offerings, v. 24. By this, God was honoured, the joy of the festival was kept up, and the strangers were encouraged to come again to Jerusalem. It was generously done of the king and the princes, thus plentifully to entertain the whole congregation; but what is a great estate good for, but that it puts men into a capacity of doing so much the more good. Christ feasted those that followed him. I believe neither Hezekiah nor his princes were the poorer at the year's end for this their pious liberality.

II. Many good prayers were put up to God with the peace-offerings, v. 22. *They made confession to the Lord God of their fathers*, in which the intent and meaning of the peace-offerings were directed and explained. When the priests sprinkled the blood and burnt the fat, they made confession, so did the people when they feasted on their part. They made a religious confession of their relation to God and dependence upon him; a penitent confession of their sins and infirmities; a thankful confession of God's mercies to them; a supplicatory confession of their wants and desires, and, in all these, they had an eye to God as *the God of their fathers*, as a God in covenant with them.

III. There was an abundance of good preaching. The Levites (whose office it was, Deut. 33. 10.) *taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord*, read and opened the scriptures, and instructed the congregation concerning God, and their duty to him; there was great need of it, after so long a famine of the word as had been in the last reign. Hezekiah did not himself preach, but he *speak comfortably to the Levites* that did, attended their preaching, commended their diligence, and assured them of his protection and countenance; hereby he encouraged them to study hard and take pains, and put a reputation upon them, that the people might respect and regard them, the more. Princes and magistrates, by owning and encouraging faithful and laborious preachers, greatly serve the interest of God's kingdom among men.

IV. They sang psalms every day, v. 21, *The Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day*, both with songs and musical instruments; thus expressing their own, and exciting one another's, joy in God, and thankfulness to him. Praising God should be much of our work in our religious assemblies.

V. Having kept the seven days of the feast in this religious manner, they had so much comfort in it, that they *kept other seven days*, v. 23. They did not institute any new modes of worship, but repeated and continued the old. The case was extraordinary, they had been long without the ordinance, guilt had been contracted by the neglect of it. They had now got a very great congregation together, and were in a devout and serious frame; they knew not when they might have such another opportunity, and therefore could not now find in their hearts to part till they had doubled the time. Many of them were a great way from home, and had business in the country to look after, for, this being the second month, they were in the midst of their harvest; yet they were in no haste to return, the zeal of God's house made them forget themselves and their secular affairs. How unlike those who snuffed at God's service, and said, *What a weariness is it!* Or those who asked, *When will the sabbath be*

gone? The servants of God should abound in his work.

VI. All this they did *with gladness*; (v. 23.) they all rejoiced, and particularly the *strangers*, v. 25. *So there was great joy in Jerusalem*, v. 26. Never was the like since the dedication of the temple in Solomon's time. Note, Holy duties should be performed with holy gladness; we should be forward to them, and take pleasure in them, relish the sweetness of communion with God, and look upon it as a matter of unspeakable joy and comfort, that we are thus favoured, and have such earnest of everlasting joy.

VII. The congregation was at length dismissed with a solemn blessing, v. 27. 1. The priests pronounced it: for it was part of their office to *bless the people*, Numb. 6. 22, 23, in which they were both the people's mouth to God, by way of prayer; and God's mouth to the people, by way of promise; for their blessing included both. In it they testified both their desire of the people's welfare, and their dependence upon God, and that word of his grace, to which they commended them. What a comfort is it to a congregation to be sent home thus crowned! 2. God said *Amen* to it. The voice of the priests, when they *blessed the people, was heard in heaven*, and came up to the *habitation of God's holiness*. When they pronounced the blessing, God commanded it, and perhaps gave some sensible token of the ratification of it. The prayer that comes up to heaven in a cloud of incense, will come down again to this earth in showers of blessings.

CHAP. XXXI.

We have here a further account of that blessed reformation of which Hezekiah was a glorious instrument, and of the happy advances he made in it. 1. All the remnants of idolatry were destroyed and abolished, v. 1. II. The priests and Levites were set to work again, every man in his place, v. 2. III. Care was taken for their maintenance. 1. The royal bounty to the clergy, and for the support of the temple service, was duly paid, v. 3. 2. Orders were given for the raising of the people's quota, v. 4. 3. The people thereupon brought in their dues abundantly, v. 5. 10. 4. Commissioners were appointed for the due distribution of what was brought in, v. 11. 19. *Lastly*, Here is the general praise of Hezekiah's sincerity in all his undertakings, v. 20, 21.

1. **N**OW when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh; until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned every man to his possession into their own cities. 2. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt-offerings and for peace-offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD. 3. *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt-offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as *it is written* in the law of the LORD. 4. Moreover, he commanded the people that

dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD. 5. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all *things* brought they in abundantly. 6. And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithes of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things *which were* consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps. 7. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished *them* in the seventh month. 3. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel. 9. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10. And Azariah the chief priest, of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people: and that which is left *is* this great store.

We have here an account of what was done after the passover; what was wanting in the solemnities of preparation for it before, was made up in that which is better, a due improvement of it after. When the religious exercises of a Lord's-day or a communion are finished, we must not think that then the work is done. No; then the hardest part of our work begins, which is to exemplify the impressions of the ordinance upon our minds in all the instances of a holy conversation. So it was here; when all this was finished, there was more to be done.

I. They applied themselves with vigour to destroy all the monuments of idolatry. The king had done what he could of this kind, (2 Kings 18. 4.) but the people could discover those profane relics which escaped the eye of the king's officers, and therefore they went out to see what they could do, v. 1. This was done immediately after the passover. Note, The comfort of communion with God should kindle in us a holy zeal and indignation against every thing that is offensive to God. If our hearts have been made to burn within us at an ordinance, that spirit of burning will consume the dross of corruption: *What have I now to do any more with idols?* Their zeal here in destroying the *images and groves, the high places and altars*, appeared, 1. In that they did this, not only in the cities of Judah and Benjamin, but in those of Ephraim and Manasseh; some think that those cities are meant, which were come under the protection and the jurisdiction of the kings of Judah; others think that, Hoshea, king of Israel, not forbidding it, their zeal carried them out to the destruction of idolatry, even in many parts of this kingdom. At least, those that came out of Ephraim and Manasseh to keep the passover, (as many did, *ch.* 30. 18.) destroyed all their own images and groves, and did the like for as many more as they had influence

upon, or could make interest in for leave to do it: we should not only reform ourselves, but do all we can to reform others too. 2. They destroyed all, they utterly destroyed all, they spared none for favour or affection either to the images or to their worshippers; though ever so ancient, ever so costly, ever so beautiful, and ever so well patronised, yet they must all be destroyed. Those that sincerely set themselves against sin, will set themselves against all sin. 3. They would not return to their houses, though they had been long absent, till this was done: they could not be easy, nor think themselves safe, in their cities, as long as their images and groves, those betrayers and destroyers of their country, were left standing. Perhaps the prophet Isaiah pointed to this, when, a little before, he spake of a day in which men should cast away the very idols that themselves had made. So surprising was the blessed change, Isa. 2. 20.—31. 6, 7.

II. Hezekiah revived and restored the courses of the priests and Levites, which David had appointed, and which had of late been put out of course, v. 2. The temple-service was put into method again, to run in the old channel. Every man was made to know his work, his place, his time, and what was expected from him. Good order contributes much to the carrying on of a good work. The priests were appointed in their courses for *burnt-offerings and peace-offerings*, the Levites in their courses were some to minister to the priests, others to *give thanks and praise*. See 1 Chron. 23. 4, 5. And all this in the *gates or courts of the tents of the Lord*. The temple is here called a *tent*, because the temple-privileges are moveable things, and this temple was shortly to be removed.

III. He appropriated a branch of the revenue of his crown to the maintenance and support of the altar. Though the people were to be at the charge of the daily offerings, and those on the sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, yet, rather than they should be burthened with the expense, he allowed out of his own estate, or out of his exchequer, for all those offerings, v. 3. It was a generous act of piety, wherein he consulted both God's honour and his people's ease, as a faithful servant to him, and a tender father to them. Let princes and great men reckon that well bestowed, and set out to the best interest, which they give for the support and encouragement of religion in their country.

IV. He issued out an order to the inhabitants of Jerusalem first, v. 4. (that they who were nearest the temple, and both saved and got by being so, might give a good example to others,) but which was afterward extended to, or, at least admitted by, the *cities of Judah*, that they should carefully pay in their dues, according to the law of the priests and Levites. This had been long neglected, which made the work to be neglected; for a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. But Hezekiah, having himself been liberal, may with a good grace require his subjects to be just, to the temple-service. And observe the end he aims at in recovering and restoring to the priests and Levites their portion, that they *might be encouraged in the law of the Lord*, in the study of it, and in doing their duty according to it. Observe here, 1. It is fit that ministers should be not only maintained, but encouraged, that they should not only be kept to do their work, but that they should also have wherewith to live comfortably, that they may do it with cheerfulness. 2. Yet they are to be maintained, not in idleness, pride, and luxury, but in *the law of the Lord*, in their observance of it themselves, and in teaching others the good knowledge of it.

V. The people, thereupon, brought in their tithes very readily; they wanted nothing but to be called upon; and therefore, *as soon as the commandment*

came abroad, the first-fruits and all the holy things were duly brought in, *v. 5, 6*. What the priests had occasion for, for themselves and their families, they made use of, and the overplus was *laid in heaps, v. 6*. All harvest-time, they were increasing these heaps, as the fruits of the earth were gathered in, for God was to have his dues out of them all. Though a prescription may be pleaded for a *modus decimandi*—*tything-modus*; yet it cannot be pleaded *pro non decimando*—*for the omission of tything*. When harvest ended, they finished their heaps, *v. 7*. Now here we have, 1. The account given to Hezekiah concerning those heaps. He *questioned with the priests and Levites* concerning them, why they did not use what was paid in, but hoarded it up thus, *v. 9*. To which it was answered, that they had made use of all they had occasion for, for the maintenance of themselves and their families, and for their winter-store, and that this was that which was left over and above, *v. 10*. They did not hoard these heaps for covetousness, but to show what plentiful provision God by his law had made for them, if they could but have it collected and brought in; and that they who conscientiously give God his dues out of their estates, bring a blessing upon all they have; *Since they began to bring in the offerings, the Lord had blessed his people*. See for this, Hag. 2. 19. "Try me," says God, "if you will not otherwise trust me, whether, upon your bringing the tithes into the store-house, you have not a blessing poured out upon you," Mal. 3. 10, 11. Ezek. 44. 30. 2. The acknowledgment which the king and princes made of it, *v. 8*. They gave thanks to God for his good providence which gave them something to bring, and his good grace which gave them hearts to bring it. And they also *blessed the people*, that is, commended them for their doing well now, without reproaching them for their former neglects. It is observable, that after they had tasted the sweetness of God's ordinance in the late comfortable passover, they were thus free in maintaining the temple-service. They that experience the benefit of a settled ministry, will not grudge the expense of it.

11. Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared *them*, 12. And brought in the offerings, and the tithes, and the dedicated things, faithfully; over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next. 13. And Jehiel, and Azariah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers, under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. 14. And Kore the son of Innah the Levite, the porter toward the east, was over the free-will-offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things. 15. And next him were Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in *their set office*, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small: 16. Besides their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, *even unto every one that*

entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses; 17. Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses: 18. And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness: 19. Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, *which were* in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites. 20. And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the LORD his God. 21. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart, and prospered.

Here we have,

1. Two particular instances of the care of Hezekiah concerning church-matters; having put them into good order, to keep them so. The tithes and other holy things being brought in, he provided,

1. That they should be carefully laid up, and not left exposed in loose heaps, liable to be wasted and embezzled; he ordered chambers to be made ready in some of the courts of the temple for store-chambers, (*v. 11*.) and into them the offerings were brought, and there kept under lock and key, *v. 12, 13*. Treasurers or store-keepers were appointed, who had the oversight of them, to see that *moth and rust* did not corrupt them, nor *thieves break through to steal*. This wisdom of laying up the surplus in days of plenty, we may learn from the ant, who *provideth meat in summer*. The laying up in store what was brought in, was an encouragement to people to pay in their contributions. That will be given cheerfully by the public, which appears to be well-husbanded.

2. That they should be faithfully laid out, according to the uses they were intended for. Church-treasures are not to be hoarded any longer than till there is occasion for them; even the rust will be a witness against them that do. Officers were appointed, men (no doubt) of approved wisdom and faithfulness, to *distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things* among the priests, (*v. 14*.) and to see that they all had a competent maintenance for themselves and their families. The law provided sufficient for them all, and therefore if some had too little, it must be because others had too much; to prevent such inequality, these officers were to go by some certain rule of proportion, in the disposal of the incomes of the temple. It is said of the priests here, (*v. 18*.) *that in their set office they sanctified themselves; in faith they sanctified themselves*, so the word is; that is, as Bishop Patrick explains it, they attended their ministry at the house of God, not doubting but they should be provided with all things necessary; now because they served God in that confidence, care was taken that they should not be made ashamed of their hope.

They that sanctify themselves to God and his service in faith, believing that he will see them want nothing that is good for them, *shall, verily, be fed.*

Out of the offerings of the Lord distribution was made, (1.) To the priests in the cities (v. 15.) who staid at home while their brethren went to Jerusalem, and did good there in *teaching the good knowledge of the Lord*; the preaching-priests were maintained as well as the sacrificing-priests, and they that abode by the stuff, as they that warred the warfare. (2.) To those that *entered into the house of the Lord*, all the males from three years old and upwards; for the male children even at that tender age, it seems, were allowed to come into the temple with their parents, and shared with them in this distribution, v. 16. (3.) Even the Levites from twenty years old and upward had their share, v. 17. (4.) The wives and children of the priests and Levites had a comfortable maintenance out of those offerings, v. 18. In maintaining ministers, regard must be had to their families, that not they only, but their's may have food convenient. In some countries where ministers have their salary paid them by the state, an addition is made to it upon the birth of a child. (5.) The priests in the country, that lived in the *fields of the suburbs*, were not overlooked in this ministration, v. 19. They also had their share, who were *inhabitants of the villages*, though they might be supposed to live at a less expense.

II. A general character of Hezekiah's services for the support of religion, v. 20, 21. 1. His pious zeal reached to all the parts of his kingdom, *thus he did throughout all Judah*; every part of the country, and not those only that lay next him, shared in the good fruits of his government. 2. He sincerely designed to please God, and approved himself to him in all he did: he *wrought that which was good before the Lord his God*; all his care was to do that which should be accepted of God, which was right, (that is, agreeable to natural equity,) and truth, (that is, agreeable to divine revelation, and his covenant with God,) *before the Lord*; to do according to that law which is holy, just, and good. 3. What he began, he went through with, prosecuted it with vigour, and *did it with all his heart*. 4. All his good intentions were brought to a good issue; whatever he did in the service of the house of God, and in the government of his kingdom, he prospered in it. What is undertaken with a sincere regard to the glory of God, will succeed to our own honour and comfort at last.

CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the reign of Hezekiah. I. The descent which Sennacherib made upon him, and the care he took to fortify himself, his city, and the minds of his people against that enemy, v. 1. . 8. II. The insolent blasphemous letters and messages which Sennacherib sent him, v. 9. . 19. III. The real answer God gave to Sennacherib's blasphemies, and to Hezekiah's prayers, in the total rout of the Assyrian army, to the shame of Sennacherib, and the honour of Hezekiah, v. 20. . 23. IV. Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery from that; his sin and his recovery from that; with the honours that attended him living and dead, v. 24. . 33.

1. **A**FTER these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. 2. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, 3. He took counsel with

his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains, which *were* without the city; and they did help him. 4. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria, come and find much water? 5. Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers and another wall without, and repaired Milo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. 6. And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, 7. Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for *there be more with us than with him*. 3. With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is the LORD our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Here is,

I. The formidable design of Sennacherib against Hezekiah's kingdom, and the vigorous attempt he made upon it. This Sennacherib was now, as Nebuchadnezzar was afterward, the terror and scourge and great oppressor of that part of the world, that aimed to raise a boundless monarchy for himself upon the ruins of all his neighbours; his predecessor Salmanser had lately made himself master of the kingdom of Israel, and carried the ten tribes captive: Sennacherib thought, in like manner, to win Judah for himself. Pride and ambition put men upon grasping at universal dominion; and it is observable that, just about this time, Rome was built by Romulus, a city which afterward came to reign more than any other had done *over the kings of the earth*. Sennacherib invaded Judah immediately* after the reformation of it, and the re-establishment of religion in it; *after these things, he entered into Judah*, v. 1. 1. It was well ordered by the Divine Providence, that he did not give them this disturbance before the reformation was finished and established, which might have put a stop to it. 2. Perhaps he intended to chastise Hezekiah for destroying that idolatry to which he himself was devoted; he looked upon Hezekiah as profane in what he had done, and that he had thrown himself out of the divine protection, and might therefore be easily made a prey of. 3. God ordered it at this time, that he might have an opportunity of showing himself strong on the behalf of this returning reforming people. He brought this trouble upon them, that he might have the honour, and might put on them the honour of their deliverance. *After these things, and the establishment thereof*, one would expect to hear of nothing but perfect peace, and that none durst meddle with a people thus qualified for the divine favour; yet the next news we hear, is, that a threatening destroying army enters the country, and is ready to lay all waste. We may be in the way of our duty, and yet meet with trouble and danger; God orders it for the trial of our confidence

* From the 2 Kings 18. 13. we learn that it was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign.—Ed.

in him, and the manifestation of his care concerning us. The little opposition which Sennacherib met with in entering Judah, possessed his mind with the conceit that all was his own. He thought to *win all the fenced cities*, (v. 1.) and purposed to *fight against Jerusalem*, v. 2. See 2 Kings 18. 7, 13.

II. The preparation which Hezekiah prudently made against this storm that threatened him. He *took counsel with his princes* what he should do, what measures he should take; and with their advice, he provided, 1. That the *country* should give him a *cold* reception, for he took care that he should find no water in it, (and then his army must perish for thirst,) or, at least, that there should be a scarcity of water, by which his army would be weakened, and unfitted for service. A powerful army, if it want water but a few days, will be but a heap of dry dust. All hands were set immediately to work, to *stop the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land*, turning that (it is probable) into the city by pipes under ground. Such as this is the policy commonly practised now-a-days of destroying the forage before an invading army. 2. That the *city* should give him a *warm* reception: in order to this, he repaired the wall, raised towers, and made darts, or, as it is in the margin, *swords or weapons*, and shields in abundance, (v. 5.) and appointed captains, v. 6. Note, Those that trust God with their safety, must yet use proper means for their safety, else they tempt him, and do not trust him. *God will provide*, but so must we also.

III. The encouragement which he gave to his people to depend upon God in this distress. He gathered them together in a broad open street, and *spoke comfortably to them*, v. 6. He had a good heart on it himself, and was confident it would issue well; he was not like his father, who had much guilt to terrify him, and no faith to encourage him; so that, in a time of public danger, *his heart was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*, and then no marvel that *the heart of his people was so too*, Isa. 7. 2. With what he said, he put life into his people, his captains especially, and *spoke to their heart*, as the word is. 1. He endeavours to keep down their fears. "*Be strong and courageous*, do not think of surrendering the city or capitulating, but resolve to hold it out to the last man; do not think of losing the city, or to fall into the enemy's hand; there is no danger. Let the soldiers be bold and brave, make good their posts, stand to their arms, and fight manfully, and let the citizens encourage them to do so. *Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria*." The prophet had thus encouraged them from God, (Isa. 10. 24.) *Be not afraid of the Assyrian*; and here the king from him. Now it was that *the sinners in Zion were afraid*, (Isa. 33. 14.) but the righteous *dwelt on high*, (v. 15. 16.) and *meditated terror* so as to conquer it, (v. 18.) which refers to what is recorded here. 2. He endeavours to keep their faith in order to the silencing and suppressing of their fears. "He has a *multitude with him*, and yet there be *more with us than with him*; for we have God with us, and how many do you reckon for him? With him is an arm of flesh, which he trusts to; but *with us is the Lord*, whose power is irresistible; our God, whose promise is inviolable; a God in covenant with us, *to help us, and to fight our battles*, not only to help us to fight them, but to fight them for us, if he pleases;" and so he did here. Note, A believing confidence in God will raise us above the prevailing fear of man. He that *feareth the fury of the oppressor, forgetteth the Lord his Maker*, Isa. 51. 12, 13. It is probable that Hezekiah said more to this purport, and that the people rested themselves upon what he said, not merely upon his word, but on the things he said concerning the presence of God with

them and his power to relieve them. The belief of this made them easy. Let the good subjects and soldiers of Jesus Christ rest themselves thus upon his word, and boldly say, *Since God is for us, who can be against us?*

9. After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem, (but he *himself laid siege* against Lachish, and all his power with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that *were* at Jerusalem, saying, 10. Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem? 11. Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 12. Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? 13. Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of my hand? 14. Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations, that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of my hand? 15. Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of my hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of my hand? 16. And his servants spake yet *more* against the Lord God, and against his servant Hezekiah. 17. He wrote also letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people out of my hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of my hand. 18. Then they cried with a loud voice, in the Jews' speech, unto the people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them, that they might take the city. 19. And they spake against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of man. 20. For this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven. 21. And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria: so he returned with shame of face to his own land.

And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. 22. Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *other*, and guided them on every side. 23. And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

This story of the rage and blasphemy of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer, and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the destruction of the Assyrian army, we had more at large in the book of Kings, 2 Kings 18, 19. It is contracted here, yet large enough to show these three things:

I. The impiety and malice of the church's enemies. Sennacherib has his hands full in besieging Lachish, *v.* 9. but hears that Hezekiah is fortifying Jerusalem, and encouraging his people to stand it out; and therefore, before he came in person to besiege it, he sends messengers to make speeches, and himself writes letters to frighten Hezekiah and his people into a surrender of the city. See, 1. His great malice against the king of Judah, in endeavouring to withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him. He does not treat with Hezekiah, as a man of honour would have done, nor propose fair terms to him, but uses mean and base artifices, unbecoming a crowned head, to terrify the common people, and persuade them to desert him. He represented Hezekiah as one who designed to deceive his subjects into their ruin, and betray them to *famine and thirst*; (*v.* 11.) as one who had done them great wrong, and exposed them already to the divine displeasure by taking away the high places and altars; (*v.* 12.) and who, against the common interest of his people, held out against a force that would certainly be their ruin, *v.* 15. 2. His great impiety against the God of Israel; *the God of Jerusalem* he is called, *v.* 19. because that was the place he had chosen to put his name there, and because that was the place which was now threatened by the enemy, and which the Divine Providence had under its special protection. This proud blasphemer compares the great Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, with the dunghill-gods of the nations, the work of men's hands, and thinks him no more able to deliver his worshippers, than they were to deliver theirs, *v.* 19. As if an infinite and eternal Spirit had no more wisdom and power than a stone or the stock of a tree. He boasts of his triumphs over the gods of the nations, that they could none of them protect their people, *v.* 13-15. and thence infers not only, *How shall your God deliver you?* *v.* 14. but, as if he were inferior to them all, *How much less shall your God deliver you?* As if he were less able to help than any of them. Thus did they rail; rail in writing, (which being more deliberate, is so much the worse,) *on the Lord God of Israel*, as if he were a cipher and an empty name, like all the rest, *v.* 17. Sennacherib, in the instructions he gave, said more than enough; but, as if his blasphemies had been too little, his servants, who learned insolence from their master, spake yet more than he bade them *against the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah*, *v.* 16. And God resents and will reckon for, what it said against his servants, as well as what is said against himself. All this was intended to frighten the people from their hope in God; which David's enemies sought to take him off

from, (Ps. 11. 1.—42. 10.) saying, *There is no help for him in God*, Ps. 3. 27.—1. 11. Thus they hoped to take the city by weakening the hands of those that should defend it. Satan, in his temptations, aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency, knowing that he gain his point, if he can do that; as we keep our ground, if our *faith fail not*, Luke 22. 32.

II. The duty and interest of the church's friends: and that is, in the day of distress to pray and cry to Heaven. So Hezekiah did, and the prophet Isaiah, *v.* 20. It was a happy time, when the king and the prophet join thus in prayer. Is any troubled? Is any terrified? Let them pray. So we engage God for us, so we encourage ourselves in him. Praying to God is here called *crying to Heaven*, because we are, in prayer, to eye him as our Father in heaven, whence he beholds the children of men, and where he has prepared his throne.

III. The power and goodness of the church's God. He is able both to control his enemies, be they never so high, and to relieve his friends, be they never so low. As the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them, (Deut. 32. 27.) so the prayers of his people engage him for them; they did so here: 1. The army of the Assyrians was cut off by the sword of an angel, which triumphed particularly in the slaughter of the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, who defied the sword of any man. God delights to abase the proud and secure. The Targum says, The word of the Lord (the Eternal Word) sent Gabriel to do this execution, and that it was done with lightning, and in the passover-night; that was the night in which the angel destroyed the first-born of Egypt. But that was not all; 2. The king of the Assyrians, having received this disgrace, was cut off by the sword of his own sons. They that *came forth of his own bowels, slew him*, *v.* 21. Thus was he mortified first, and then murdered; shamed first, and then slain. Evil pursues sinners; and when they escape one mischief, they run upon another unseen.

Now, by this work of wonder, (1.) God was glorified, as the Protector of his people. Thus he saved Jerusalem, not only from the hand of Sennacherib, but from the hand of *all others*; for such a deliverance as this was an earnest of much mercy in store; and he guided them, that is, he guarded them, on every side. God defends his people by directing them, shows them what they should do, and so saves them from what is designed or done against them. For this, *many brought gifts unto the Lord*, when they saw the great power of God in the defence of his people. Strangers were thereby induced to supplicate his favour, and enemies to deprecate his wrath, and both brought gifts to his temple, in token of their care and desire. (2.) Hezekiah was magnified as the favourite and particular care of Heaven; *many brought presents to him*, (*v.* 22, 23.) in token of the honour they had for him, and to make an interest in him. By the favour of God, enemies are lost, and friends gained.

24. In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. 25. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, (*both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,)

so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. 27. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; 28. Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. 29. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him substance very much. 30. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 31. Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart. 32. Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the Vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, *and* in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 33. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here we conclude the story of Hezekiah, with an account of three things concerning him:

I. His sickness, and his recovery from it, *v.* 24. It is but briefly mentioned here; we had a large narrative of it, 2 Kings 20. His disease seemed likely to be mortal. In the extremity of it, he prayed, God answered him, and gave him a sign that he should recover; the going back of the sun ten degrees.

II. His sin, and his repentance for that; this was also more largely related, 2 Kings 20. 12, &c. yet several things are here observed concerning it, which we had not there.

1. The occasion of it was the king of Babylon's sending an honourable embassy to him, to congratulate him on his recovery. But here it is added that they came to inquire of *the wonder that was done in the land*, (*v.* 31.) either the destruction of the Assyrian army, or the going back of the sun. The Assyrians were their enemies, they came to inquire concerning their fall, that they might triumph in it. The sun was their god, they came to inquire concerning the favour he had shown to Hezekiah, that they might honour him whom their god honoured, *v.* 31. These miracles were wrought to alarm and awaken a stupid careless world, and turn them from dumb and lame idols to the living God; and men were startled by them, but not converted till a greater wonder was done in that land, in the appearing of Jesus Christ; Matth. 2. 1, 2.

2. God left him to himself in it, to try him, *v.* 31. God, by the power of his almighty grace, could have prevented the sin; but he permitted it for wise and holy ends, that, by this trial and his

weakness in it, he might know, that is, it might be known, (an usual Hebraism,) what was in his heart; that he was not so perfect in grace as he thought he was, but had his follies and infirmities as well as other men. God left him to himself, to be proud of his wealth, to keep him from being proud of his holiness. It is good for us to know ourselves, and our own weakness and sinfulness, that we may not be conceited, or self-confident, but may always think meanly of ourselves, and live in a dependence upon divine grace. We know not the corruption of our own hearts, nor what we shall do if God leave us to ourselves. *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

3. His sin was, that *his heart was lifted up*, *v.* 25. He was proud of the honour God had put upon him in so many instances; the honour his neighbours did him in bringing him presents; and now that the king of Babylon should send an embassy to him to caress and court him, this exalted him above measure. When Hezekiah had destroyed other idolatries, he began to idolize himself. O what need have great men, and good men, and useful men, to study their own infirmities and follies, and their obligations to free grace, that they may never think highly of themselves, and to beg earnestly of God, that he will hide pride from them, and always keep them humble!

4. The aggravation of his sin, was, that he made so bad a return to God for his favours to him, making even those favours the food and fuel of his pride, *v.* 25. *He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.* Note, It is justly expected that they who have received mercy from God, should study to make some suitable returns for the mercies they have received; and if they do not, their ingratitude will certainly be charged upon them. Though we cannot render an equivalent, or the payment of a debt, we must shew the acknowledgment of a favour: *What shall I render*, that may be so accepted? Ps. 116. 12.

5. The divine displeasure he was under for this sin; though it was but a heart-sin, and the overt-act seemed not only innocent, but civil, (the showing of his treasures to a friend,) yet wrath came upon him and his kingdom for it, *v.* 25. Note, Pride is a sin that God hates as much as any other, and particularly in his own people. They that exalt themselves, must expect to be abased, and put under humbling providences. Wrath came on David for his pride in numbering the people.

6. His repentance for this sin. *He humbled himself for the pride of his heart.* Note, (1.) Though God may, for wise and holy ends, suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it; they *shall not be utterly cast down*. (2.) Heart-sins are to be repented of, though they go no further. (3.) Self-humiliation is a necessary branch of repentance. (4.) Pride of heart, by which we have lifted up ourselves, is a sin, for which we ought, in a special manner, to humble ourselves. (5.) People ought to mourn for the sins of their rulers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves with Hezekiah; either because they knew they also had been guilty of the same sin, or, at least, feared they might share in the punishment. When David, in his pride, numbered the people, they all smarted for it.

7. The reprieve granted thereupon. The wrath came not in his days; while he lived, there were peace and truth; so much does repentance avail to put by, or, at least, to put off, the tokens of God's anger.

III. Here is the honour done to Hezekiah: 1. By the providence of God while he lived. He had *exceeding much riches and honour*, (*v.* 27.) replenished his stores, victualled his camps, fortified

his city, and did all he wished to do; for God *had given him substance very much*, v. 29. Among his great performances his turning the water-course of Gihon is mentioned, (v. 30.) which was done upon occasion of Sennacherib's invasion, v. 3, 4. The water had come into that which is called the *old pool*, (Isa. 22. 11.) and the *upper pool*, (Isa. 7. 3.) but he gathered the waters into a new place, for the greater convenience of the city, called the *lower pool*, Isa. 22. 9. And, in general, he *prospered in all his works*, for they were good works. 2. By the respects paid to his memory when he was dead. (1.) The prophet Isaiah wrote his life and reign, (v. 32.) his acts, and his goodness, or piety, part of the honour of which is to be recorded and remembered, for example to others. (2.) The people *did him honour at his death*, (v. 33.) buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres, made as great burning for him as for Asa; or, which is a much greater honour, made great lamentation for him, as for Josiah. See how the honour of serious godliness is manifested in the consciences of men. Though it is to be feared that the generality of the people did not heartily comply with the reforming kings, yet they could not but praise their endeavours for reformation, and the memory of those kings was blessed among them. It is a debt we owe to those who have been eminently useful in their day, to do them honour at their death, when they are out of the reach of flattery, and we have seen the end of their conversation. The due payment of this debt will be an encouragement to others to do likewise.

CHAP. XXXIII.

In this chapter, we have the history of the reign, I. Of Manasseh, who reigned long. 1. His wretched apostasy from God, and revolt to idolatry, and all wickedness, v. 1.-10. 2. His happy return to God in his affliction; his repentance, v. 11.-13. his reformation, v. 15.-17. and prosperity, v. 14. with the conclusion of his reign, v. 18.-20. II. Of Amon, who reigned very wickedly, v. 21.-23. and soon ended his days unhappily, v. 24, 25.

1. **MANASSEH** *was* twelve years old when he began to reign: and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: 2. But *did that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 3. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his

son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8. Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers: so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. 9. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, *and* to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. 10. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they would not hearken.

We have here an account of the great wickedness of Manasseh; it is the same almost word for word with that which we had, 2 Kings 21. 1.-9. and took a melancholy view of it; it is no such pleasing subject, that we should delight to dwell upon it again. This foolish young prince, in contradiction to the good example and good education his father gave him, abandoned himself to all impiety; transcribed the abominations of the heathen, (v. 2.) ruined the established religion, and unravelled his father's glorious reformation, (v. 3.) profaned the house of God with his idolatry, (v. 4, 5.) dedicated his children to Moloch, and made the Devil's lying oracles his guides and his counsellors, v. 6. In contempt of the choice God had made of Sion to be his rest for ever, and Israel to be his covenant-people, (v. 8.) and the fair terms he stood upon with him, he embraced other gods, profaned God's chosen temple, and debauched his chosen people; he *made them to err, and do worse than the heathen*, (v. 9.) for if the unclean spirit return, he brings with him *seven other spirits more wicked than himself*. That which aggravated the sin of Manasseh, was, that God *spoke to him and his people*, by the prophets, *but they would not hearken*, v. 10. We may here admire the grace of God in speaking to them, and their obstinacy in turning a deaf ear to him; that either their badness did not quite turn away his goodness, but still he waited to be gracious, or that his goodness did not turn them from their badness, but still they hated to be reformed.

Now from this let us learn, 1. That it is no new thing, but a very sad thing, for the children of godly parents to turn aside from that good way of God in which they have been trained up. Parents may give many good things to their children, but they cannot give them grace. 2. Corruptions in worship are such diseases of the church, as even then, when they seem to be cured, it is very apt to relapse into again. 3. The god of this world has strangely blinded men's minds, and has a wonderful power over those that are led captive by him; else he could not draw them from God their best Friend, to depend upon their sworn enemy.

11. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13. And prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him.

and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God. 14. Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. 15. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city. 16. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. 17. Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the LORD their God only. 18. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, *they are written* in the book of the Kings of Israel: 19. His prayer also, and *how* God was entreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled, behold, *they are written* among the sayings of the seers. 20. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

We have seen Manasseh by his wickedness undoing the good that his father had done; here we have him by repentance undoing the evil that he himself had done. It is strange that this was not so much as mentioned in the book of *Kings*, nor does any thing appear there to the contrary, but that he persisted and perished in his sin. But, perhaps, the reason was, because the design of that history was to show the wickedness of the nation which brought destruction upon them; and this repentance of Manasseh, and the benefit of it, being personal only, and not national, it is overlooked there; yet here it is fully related, and a memorable instance it is of the riches of God's pardoning mercy, and the power of his renewing grace. Here is,

I. The occasion of Manasseh's repentance; and that was his afflictions. In his distress, he did not (like that king Ahaz) *trespass yet more against God*, but humbled himself, and returned to God. Sanctified afflictions often prove happy means of conversion. What his distress was, we are here told, *v.* 11. God brought a foreign enemy upon him; the king of Babylon, that courted his father who faithfully served God, invaded him now that he was treacherously departed from God. He is here called *king of Assyria*, because he had made himself master of Assyria, which he would the more easily do, for the defeat of Sennacherib's army, and its destruction, before Jerusalem. He aimed at the treasures which the ambassadors had seen, and all those precious things; but God sent him to chastise a sinful people, and reduce a straying prince. The cap-

tains took *Manasseh among the thorns*, in some bush or other, perhaps in his garden, where he had hid himself. Or, it is spoken figuratively; he was perplexed in his counsels, and embarrassed in his affairs. He was, as we say, in the briers, and knew not which way to extricate himself, and so became an easy prey to the Assyrian captains; who, no doubt, plundered his house, and took away what they pleased, as Isaiah had foretold, 2 Kings 20. 17, 18. What was Hezekiah's pride, was their prey. They bound Manasseh, who had been held before with the cords of his own iniquity, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. About what time of his reign this was, we are not told; the Jews say that it was in his 22d year.

II. The expressions of his repentance; (*v.* 12, 13.) *when he was in affliction*, he had time to bethink himself, and reason enough too. He saw what he had brought himself to by his sin; he found the gods he had served, unable to help him. He knew that repentance was the only way of restoring his affairs, and therefore to him he returned, from whom he had revolted. 1. He was convinced that Jehovah is the one only living and true God. *Then he knew*, that is, he believed and considered, that the LORD he *was* God; he might have known it at a less expense, if he would have given due attendance and credit to the word written and preached: but it was better to pay thus dear for the knowledge of God, than to perish in ignorance and unbelief. Had he been a prince in the palace of Babylon, it is probable he had been confirmed in his idolatry; but, being a captive in the prisons of Babylon, he was convinced of it, and reclaimed from it. 2. He applied himself to him as *his* God now, renouncing all others, and resolving to cleave to him only; the God of his fathers, and a God in covenant with him. 3. He humbled himself greatly before him; was truly sorry for his sins, ashamed of them, and afraid of the wrath of God. It becomes sinners to humble themselves before the face of that God whom they have offended. It becomes sufferers to humble themselves under the hand of that God who corrects them, and to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Our hearts should be humble under humbling providences; then we accommodate ourselves to them, and answer God's end in them. 4. He prayed to him for the pardon of sin, and the return of his favour. Prayer is the relief of penitents, the relief of the afflicted. That is a good prayer, and very pertinent in this case, which we find among the apocryphal books, entitled, *The prayer of Manasses, king of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon*; whether it was his or no, is uncertain; if it was, in it he *gives glory to God*, as the *God of their fathers and their righteous seed*: as the Creator of the world, a God whose *anger is insupportable*, and yet *his merciful promise unmeasurable*. He pleads that God has *promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned*, and has *appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved*; not unto the just, as to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to *me* (says he) *that am a sinner*; for *I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea*: so he confesses his sin largely, and aggravates it. *Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not*; he pleads, *Thou art the God of them that repent*, &c. and concludes, *Therefore I will praise thee for ever, &c.*

III. God's gracious acceptance of his repentance. *God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication*. Though affliction drives us to God, he will not there fore reject us, if in sincerity we seek him, for afflictions are sent on purpose to bring us to him. As a token of God's favour to him, he made a way for his escape; afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work; when Manasseh is brought back to his God and to his duty, he shall

soon be brought back to his kingdom. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how *swift to show mercy*. Let not great sinners despair, when Manasseh himself, upon his repentance, found favour with God; in him God showed forth a pattern of long-suffering, as 1 Tim. 1. 16. Isa. 1. 18.

IV. *The fruits meet for repentance* which he brought forth after his return to his own land, v. 15, 16. 1. He turned from his sins. *He took away the strange gods*, the images of them, and that idol (whatever it was) which he had set up with so much solemnity in the house of the Lord, as if it had been master of that house; he cast out all the idolatrous altars that were in the mount of the house and in Jerusalem, as detestable things; now (we hope) he loathed them as much as ever he had loved them, and said to them, *Get ye hence*, Isa. 30. 22. "*What have I to do any more with idols? I have had enough of them.*" 2. He returned to his duty; for he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had either been abused and broken down by some of the idolatrous priests, or, at least, neglected and gone out of repair. He sacrificed thereon peace-offerings to implore God's favour, and thank-offerings to praise him for his deliverance. Nay, he now used his power to reform his people, as before he had abused it to corrupt them. *He commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel*. Note, Those that truly repent of their sins, will not only return to God themselves, but will do all they can to reduce those that have by their example been seduced and drawn away from God; else they do not thoroughly (as they ought) undo what they done amiss, nor make the plaster as wide as the wound. We find that he prevailed to bring them off from their *false gods*, but not from their *high places*, v. 17. They still sacrificed in them, yet to the Lord their God only; Manasseh could not carry the reformation so far as he had carried the corruption. It is an easy thing to debauch men's manners, but not so easy to reform them again.

V. His prosperity, in some measure, after his repentance. He might plainly see it was sin that ruined him; for when he returned to God in a way of duty, God returned to him in a way of mercy: and then he built a wall about the city of David, v. 14. for by sin he had unwall'd it, and exposed it to the enemy. He also put captains of war in the fenced cities, for the security of his country. Josephus says, that all the rest of his time, he was so changed for the better, that he was looked upon as a very happy man.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of his history. The heads of those things for a full narrative of which we are referred to the other writings that were then extant, are more than any of the kings, v. 18, 19. A particular account, it seems, was kept, 1. Of all his sin, and his trespass, the high places he built, the groves and images he set up, before he was humbled. Probably, this was taken from his own confession which he made of his sin, when God gave him repentance, and which he left upon record, and was inserted in a book, entitled, *The words of the seers*. To those seers that spake to him, v. 18. to reprove him for his sin, he sent his confession, when he repented, to be inserted in their memoirs, as a token of his gratitude to them for their kindness in reproving him. Thus it becomes penitents to take shame to themselves, to give thanks to their reprovers, and warning to others. 2. Of the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord, v. 10. the reproofs they gave him for his sin, and their exhortations to repentance. Note, Sinners ought to consider that how little notice soever they take of them, an account is kept of the words of the seers that speak to them from God, to admonish

them of their sins, warn them of their danger, and call them to their duty, which will be produced against them in the great day. 3. Of his prayer to God, (that is twice mentioned, as a remarkable thing,) and how God was entreated of him. This was written for the generations to come, that the people that should be created, might praise the Lord for his readiness in receiving returning prodigals.

Notice is taken of the place of his burial, not in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own house; he was buried privately, and nothing of that honour was done him at his death, that was done to his father. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit.

21. Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them: 23. And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself: but Amon trespassed more and more. 24. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house. 25. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon: and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

We have little recorded concerning Amon, but enough, unless it were better. Here is,

1. His great wickedness. He did as Manasseh had done in the days of his apostasy, v. 22. They who think this an evidence that Manasseh did not truly repent, forget how many good kings had wicked sons. Only, it should seem that Manasseh was in this defective, that when he cast out the images, he did not utterly deface and destroy them, according to the law which required them to burn the images with fire, Deut. 7. 5. How necessary that law was, this instance shows: for the carved images being only thrown by, and not burnt, Amon knew where to find them, soon set them up, and sacrificed to them. It is added, to represent him exceeding sinful, and to justify God in cutting him off so soon, (1.) That he outdid his father in sinning; he trespassed more and more, v. 23. His father did ill, but he did worse. They that were joined to idols, grew more and more mad upon them. (2.) That he came short of his father in repenting; he humbled not himself before the Lord as his father had humbled himself. He fell like him, but did not get up again like him. It is not so much sin, as impenitence to sin, that ruins men; not so much that they offend, as that they do not humble themselves for their offences; not the disease, but the neglect of the remedy.

2. His speedy destruction. He reigned but two years, and then his servants conspired against him and slew him, v. 24. Perhaps when Amon sinned, as his father did, in the beginning of his days, he promised himself that he should repent, as his father did, in the latter end of his days. But his case shows what a madness it is to presume upon that; if he hoped to repent when he was old, he was wretchedly disappointed; for he was cut off when he was young. He rebelled against God, and his own servants rebelled against him. Herein God was righteous, but they were wicked, and justly did the people of the land put them to death as traitors.

The lives of kings are particularly under the protection of Providence, and the laws both of God and man.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Before we see Judah and Jerusalem ruined, we shall yet see some glorious years, while good Josiah sits at the helm. By his pious endeavours for reformation, God tried them yet once more; if they had known in this their day, the day of their visitation, the things that belonged to their peace and improved them, their ruin might have been prevented. But, after this reign, they were hid from their eyes, and the next reigns brought an utter desolation upon them. In this chapter, we have, I. A general account of Josiah's character, v. 1, 2. II. His zeal to root out idolatry, v. 3..7. III. His care to repair the temple, v. 8..13. IV. The finding of the book of the law, and the good use made of it, v. 14..23. V. The public reading of the law to the people, and their renewing their covenant with God thereupon, v. 29..33. Much of this we had, 2 Kings 22.

1. **JOSIAH** was eight years old when he began to reign: and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left. 3. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. 4. And they brake down the altars of Baalim, in his presence: and the images that were on high above them he cut down: and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. 5. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. 7. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

Concerning Josiah we are told,

1. That he came to the crown when he was very young, but 8 years old; yet his infancy did not debar him from his right, and he reigned 31 years, (v. 1.) a considerable time. I fear, however, that in the beginning of his reign, things went much as they had done in his father's time, because, being a child, he must have left the management of them to others; so that it was not till his 12th year, which goes far in the number of his years, that the reformation began, v. 3. He could not, as Hezekiah did, fall about it immediately.

2. That he reigned well, (v. 2.) approved himself to God, trod in the steps of David, and did not decline either to the right hand or to the left; for there are errors on both hands.

3. That while he was young, about 16 years old,

he began to seek after God, v. 3. We have reason to think he had not so good an education as Manasseh had; it is well if those about him did not endeavour to corrupt and debauch him; yet he thus sought God when he was young. It is the duty and interest of young people, and will particularly be the honour of young gentlemen, as soon as they come to years of understanding, to begin to seek God; for they that seek him early shall find him.

4. That in his 12th year, when, it is probable, he took the administration of the government entirely into his own hands, he began to purge his kingdom from the remains of idolatry; he destroyed the high places, groves, images, altars, all the utensils of idolatry, v. 3, 4. He not only cast them out as Manasseh did, but brake them to pieces, and made dust of them. This destruction of idolatry is here said to be in his 12th year, but it was said, 2 Kings 23. 23. to be in his 18th year; something was done toward it now in his 12th year; then he began to purge out idolatry, but, probably, that good work met with opposition, so that it was not thoroughly done till they had found the book of the law 6 years after; but here the whole work is laid together briefly, which was much more largely and particularly related in the Kings. His zeal carried him out to do this, not only in Judah and Jerusalem, but in the cities of Israel too, as far as he had any influence upon them.

8. Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. 9. And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem. 10. And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and mend the house; 11. Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward: and other of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of music. 13. Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

Here, 1. Orders are given by the king for the repair of the temple, v. 8. When he had purged the house of the corruptions of it, he began to fit it

up for the services that were to be performed in it. Thus we must do by the spiritual temple of the heart; get it cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and then renewed, so as to be transformed into the image of God. Josiah, in this order, calls God *the Lord his God*; they that truly love God, will *love the habitation of his house*.

2. Care is taken about it, effectual care; the Levites went about the country, and gathered money towards it, which was returned to the three trustees mentioned, v. 8. They brought it to Hilkiah the High Priest, (v. 9.) and he and they put it into the hands of workmen, both overseers and labourers who undertook to do it by the great, as we say, or *in the gross*, v. 10, 11. It is observed that the workmen were industrious and honest, *they did the work faithfully*; (v. 12.) and workmen are not completely faithful if they are not both careful and diligent, for a confidence is reposed in them that they will be so. It is also intimated that the overseers were ingenious; for it is said that all those were employed to inspect this work, *who could skill of instruments of music*; not that their skill in music could be of any use in architecture, but it was an evidence that they were men of sense and ingenuity, and particularly that their genius lay toward the mathematics, which qualified them very much for this trust. Witty men are then wise men, when they employ their wit in doing good, in helping their friends, and, as they have opportunity, in serving the public. Observe, in this work, how God dispenses his gifts variously; here were some that were *bearers of burthens*, cut out for bodily labour, and fit to work. Here were others (*made meliori luto—of finer materials*) that had skill in music, and they were *overseers of them that laboured*, and scribes and officers; the former were the hands, these were the heads; they had need of one another, and the work needed both. Let not the overseers of the work despise the bearers of burthens, nor let them that work in the service, grudge at those whose office is to direct; but let each esteem and serve the other in love, and God have the glory, and the church the benefit, of the different gifts and dispositions of both.

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD *given* by Moses. 15. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do *it*. 17. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. 18. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king: 19. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Sha-

phan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, 21. Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. 22. And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they spake to her to that *effect*. 23. And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, 24. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: 25. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. 26. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *concerning* the words which thou hast heard; 27. Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith the LORD. 28. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

This whole paragraph we had just as it is here related, 2 Kings 22. 8-20. and have nothing to add here to what was there observed.

But, 1. We may hence take occasion to bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and that they are, or may be, in all hands; that the book of the law and gospel is not lost, is not scarce; that, in this sense, that *word of the Lord* is not *precious*. Bibles are jewels, but, thanks be to God, they are not rarities. The fountain of the waters of life is not a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, but the streams of it, in all places, *make glad the city of God*. *Unus communis aquarum—These waters flow for general use*. What a great deal shall we have to answer for if the great things of God's laws, being thus made common, should be accounted by us as strange things!

2. We may hence learn, whenever we read or hear the word of God, to affect our hearts with it, and to get them possessed with a holy fear of that wrath of God, which is there revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as Josiah's tender heart was. When he heard the words of the law, he *rent his clothes*; (v. 19.) and God was well pleased with his doing so, v. 27. Were the things contained in the scripture new to us, as they were here to Josiah, surely they would make deeper impressions upon us than commonly they do; but they are never the less weighty, and therefore should not be the less considered by us, for their being well known. Rend the heart therefore, not the garment.

3. We are here directed, when we are under convictions of sin, and apprehensions of divine wrath, to inquire of the Lord; so Josiah did, v. 21. It concerns us to ask, as they did, Acts 2. 37, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* And more particularly, as the jailer, saying, *What must I do to be saved?* Acts 16. 30. *If ye will thus inquire, inquire ye*, Isa. 21. 12. and blessed be God, we have the lively Oracles to which to apply ourselves with these inquiries.

4. We are here warned of the ruin that sin brings upon nations and kingdoms. They that forsake God, bring evil upon themselves, (v. 24, 25.) and kindle a fire *which shall not be quenched*; such will the fire of God's wrath be, when the decree is gone forth against those that obstinately and impenitently persist in their wicked ways.

5. We are here encouraged to humble ourselves before God, and seek unto him, as Josiah did: if we cannot prevail thereby to turn away God's wrath from our land, yet we shall deliver our own souls, v. 27, 28. And good people are here taught to be so far from fearing death, as to welcome it rather when it *takes them away from the evil to come*. See how the property of it is altered by making it the matter of a promise: *Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace*; housed in that ark, as Noah, when a deluge is coming.

29. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant *that was found in the house of the LORD*. 31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. 32. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all *that were present in Israel* to serve, *even to serve the LORD* their God. *And all his days they departed*

not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

We have here an account of the further advances which Josiah made toward the reformation of his kingdom, upon the hearing of the law read, and the receipt of the message God sent him by the prophetess. Happy the people that had such a king: for here we find,

1. That they were well taught. He did not go about to force them to their duty, till he had first instructed them in it. He called all the people together, great and small, young and old, rich and poor, high and low; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear the words of the book of the covenant*; for they are all concerned in those words. To put an honour upon the service, and to engage attention the more, though there were priests and Levites present, the king himself read the book to the people, (v. 30.) and he read it, no doubt, in such a manner as to show that he was himself affected with it, which would be a means of affecting the hearers.

2. That they were well fixed. The articles of agreement between God and Israel being read, that they might intelligently covenant with God, both king and people here, with great solemnity, do as it were subscribe the articles. The king in his place covenanted to keep God's commandments with all his heart and soul, according to what was *written in the book*, (v. 31.) and urged the people to declare their consent likewise to this covenant, and solemnly to promise that they would faithfully perform, fulfil, and keep, all and every thing that was on their part to be done, according to the covenant: this they did; they could not for shame do otherwise. He caused *all that were present to stand to it*, (v. 32.) and made them *all to serve*, even to *serve the Lord their God*, (v. 33.) to do it, and to *make a business of it*; he did all he could to bring them to it; to serve, even to serve; the repetition denotes that that was the only thing his heart was set on; he aimed at nothing else in what he did, but to engage them to God and their duty.

3. That they were well tended; were honest with good looking to. *All his days they departed not from following the Lord*; he kept them, with much ado, from running into idolatry again. *All his days* were days of restraint upon them; but this intimated that there was in them a *bent to backslide*, a strong inclination to idolatry; many of them wanted nothing but to have him out of the way, and then they would have their high places and their images up again. And therefore we find that *in the days of Josiah*, (Jer. 3. 6.) God charged it upon treacherous Judah, that she had *not returned to him with all her heart, but feignedly*, (v. 10.) nay, had *played the harlot*, (v. 8.) and thereby had even *justified backsliding Israel*, v. 11. In the 23d year of this reign, 4 or 5 years after this they had *gone on to provoke God to anger with the works of their hands*, Jer. 25. 3-7. And, which is very observable, it is from the beginning of Josiah's reformation, his 12th or 13th year, that *the iniquity of the house of Judah*, which brought ruin upon them, and which the prophet was to bear lying on his right side, was dated, Ezek. 4. 6. For from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem was just 40 years. Josiah was sincere in what he did, but the generality of the people were averse to it, and hankered after their idols still; so that the reformation, though well designed, and well prosecuted, by the prince, had little or no effect upon the people. It was with reluctancy that they parted with their idols; still they were in heart joined to them, and wished for them again. This, God saw, and therefore, from that time, when one would have thought

the foundations had been laid for a perpetual security and peace, from that very time, did the decree go forth for their destruction. Nothing hastens the ruin of a people, nor ripens them for it more, than the baffling of hopeful attempts for reformation, and a hypocritical return to God. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

CHAP. XXXV.

We are here to attend Josiah, I. *To the temple*, where we see his religious care for the due observance of the ordinance of the passover, according to the law, v. 1. . 19. II. *To the field of battle*, where we see his rashness, in engaging with the king of Egypt, and how dear it cost him, v. 20. . 23. III. *To the grave*, where we see him bitterly lamented, v. 24. . 27. And so we must take our leave of Josiah.

1. **M**OREOVER, Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, 3. And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; *it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders; serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel*, 4. And prepare *yourselves* by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son; 5. And stand in the holy place, according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and *after* the division of the families of the Levites: 6. So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 7. And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover-offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these *were* of the king's substance. 8. And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover-offerings two thousand and six hundred *small cattle*, and three hundred oxen. 9. Cananiah also, and Shemaiah, and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah, and Jehiel, and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites, for passover-offerings, five thousand *small cattle*, and five hundred oxen. 10. So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled the

blood from their hands, and the Levites slayed *them*. 12. And they removed the burnt-offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as *it is written* in the book of Moses: and so *did they* with the oxen. 13. And they roasted the passover with fire, according to the ordinance: but the *other* holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people. 14. And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron *were busied* in offering of burnt-offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15. And the singers the sons of Asaph, *were* in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer: and the porters *waited* at every gate: they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. 16. So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

The destruction which Josiah made of idols and idolatry, was more largely related in the *Kings*, and but just mentioned here in the foregoing chapter, v. 33. But his solemnizing of the passover, which was but touched upon there, (2 Kings 23. 21.) is very particularly related here. Many were the feasts of the Lord, appointed by the ceremonial law, but the passover was the chief; it *began them all* in the night wherein Israel came out of Egypt. It *concluded them all* in the night wherein Christ was betrayed; and in the celebration of it, Hezekiah and Josiah those two great reformers, revived religion in their day. The ordinance of the Lord's supper resembles the passover more than it does any of the Jewish festivals; and the due observance of that ordinance, according to the rule, is an instance and means both of the growing purity and beauty of churches, and of the growing piety and devotion of particular Christians. Religion cannot flourish where that passover is either wholly neglected or not duly observed; return to that, revive that, make a solemn business of that affecting binding ordinance, and then, it is to be hoped, there will be a reformation in other instances also.

In the account we had of Hezekiah's passover, the great zeal of the people was observable, and the transport of devout affection that they were in; but little of that appears here. It was more in compliance with the king that they all kept the passover, (v. 17, 18.) than from any great inclination they had to it themselves. Some pride they took in this form of godliness, but little pleasure in the power of it. But whatever defect there was among the people in the inside of the duty, both the magistrates and ministers did their part, and took care that the external part of the service should be performed with due solemnity.

I. The king exhorted and directed, quickened and encouraged, the priests and Levites to do their office in this solemnity. Perhaps he saw them remiss and indifferent, unwilling to go out of their road, or mend their pace; if ministers are so, it is not amiss for any, but most proper for magistrates, to stir them up to their business. Say to Archippus, *Take heed to thy ministry*, Col. 4. 17. Let us see how this good king managed his clergy upon this occasion.

1. He reduced them to the office they were appointed by the law of Moses, (v. 6.) and the order they were put into by David and Solomon, v. 4. *He set them in their charges*, v. 2. He did not cut them out new work, nor put them into any new method, but called them back to their institution. Their courses were settled in writing; let them have recourse to that writing, and marshal themselves according to the *divisions of their families*, v. 5. Our rule is settled in the written word; let magistrates take care that ministers walk according to that rule, and they do their duty.

2. He ordered the ark to be put in its place, which, it should seem, had of late been displaced, either by the wicked kings, to make room for their idols in the most holy place, or by Hezekiah, to make room for the workmen that repaired the temple. However it was, Josiah bids the *Levites put the holy ark in the house*, (v. 3.) and not carry it about from place to place, as perhaps of late they had done, justifying themselves therein by the practice before the temple was built. Now that the priests were discharged from this burden of the ark, they must be careful in other services about it.

3. He charged them to *serve God and his people Israel*, v. 3. Ministers must look upon themselves as servants both to Christ, and to his church for his sake, 2 Cor. 4. 5. They must take care, and take pains, and lay out themselves to the utmost, (1.) For the glory and honour of God, and to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. Paul, *a servant of God*, Tit. 1. 1. (2.) For the welfare and benefit of his people, not as having dominion over their faith, but as servants of their holiness and joy; and there will be no difficulty, in the strength of God, honestly to serve these two masters.

4. He charged them to *sanctify themselves, and prepare their brethren*, v. 6. Ministers' work must begin at home, and they must sanctify themselves in the first place, purify themselves from sin, sequester themselves from the world, and devote themselves to God; but it must not end there, they must do what they can to *prepare their brethren* by admonishing, instructing, exhorting, quickening, and comforting them. *The preparation of the heart* is indeed *from the Lord*; but ministers must be instruments in his hand.

5. He *encouraged them to the service*, v. 2. He spake comfortably to them, as Hezekiah did, ch. 30. 22. He promised them his countenance. Note, Those whom we charge, we should encourage. Most people love to be accosted kindly, and will be wrought upon by encouragement more than by threats.

II. The king, and the princes, influenced by his example, gave liberally for the bearing of the charges of this passover. The ceremonial services were expensive, which perhaps was one reason why they had been neglected. People had not zeal enough to be at the charge of them; nor were they now very fond of them, for that reason. And therefore,

1. Josiah, at his own proper cost, furnished the congregation with paschal lambs, and other sacrifices, to be offered during the seven days of the feast. He allowed out of his own estate, 30,000 *lambs for passover-offerings*; which the offerers were to feast upon, and 3,000 bullocks, (v. 7.) to be offered during the following 7 days. Note, Those who are serious in religion, when they persuade others to that which is good, should make it as cheap and easy to them as may be. And where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly; it is to be feared that the congregation, generally, had not come provided; so that if Josiah had not furnished them, the work of God must have stood still.

2. The chief of the priests, that were men of great estates, contributed toward the priests' charges, as Josiah toward the people's. *The princes*, (v. 8.) that is, the chief of the priests, the princes of the holy tribe, *rulers of the house of God*, bore the priests' charges. And some of the rich and great men of the Levites furnished them also with cattle, both great and small, for offerings, v. 9. For those that sincerely desire to be found in the way of their duty, Providence sometimes raises up friends to bear them out in it, beyond what they could have expected.

III. The priests and Levites performed their office very readily, v. 10. They killed the paschal lambs in the court of the temple, the priests sprinkled the blood upon the altar, the Levites flayed them, and then gave the flesh to the people according to their families, (v. 11, 12.) not fewer than ten, nor more than twenty, to a lamb; they took it to their several apartments, roasted it, and ate it *according to the ordinance*, v. 13. As for the other sacrifices that were eucharistical, the flesh of them was boiled according to the law of the peace-offerings, and was *divided speedily among the people*, that they might feast upon it as a token of their joy in the atonement made, and their reconciliation to God thereby. And *lastly*, The priests and Levites took care to honour God by *eating of the passover* themselves, v. 14. Let not ministers think that the care they take for the souls of others, will excuse their neglect of their own; or that being employed so much in public worship will supersede the religious exercises of their closets and families. The Levites here *made ready for themselves and for the priests*, because the priests were wholly taken up all day in the service of the altar; therefore, that they might not have their lamb to dress when they should eat it, the Levites got it ready for them against supper-time. Let ministers learn hence to help one another, and to forward one another's work, as brethren, and fellow-servants of the same Master.

IV. The singers and porters attended in their places, and did their office, v. 15. The singers with their sacred songs and music expressed and excited the joy of the congregation, and made the service very pleasant to them; and the porters at the gates took care that there should be no breaking in of any thing, to defile or disquiet the assembly, nor going out of any from it, that none should steal away till the service was done. While they were thus employed, their brethren the Levites prepared paschal lambs for them.

V. The whole solemnity was performed with

great exactness, according to the law, (v. 16, 17.) and, upon that account, there was none like it since Samuel's time, (v. 18.) for in Hezekiah's passover there were several irregularities. And Bishop Patrick observes, that in this also it exceeded the other passovers which the preceding kings had kept, that though Josiah was by no means so rich as David, and Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, yet he furnished the whole congregation with beasts for sacrifice, both paschal and eucharistical, at his own proper cost and charge, which was more than any king ever did before him.

20. After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come* not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from *meddling with* God, who *is* with me, that he destroy thee not. 22. Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23. And the archers shot at king Josiah: and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. 24. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of* the sepulchres of his fathers: and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they *are* written in the Lamentations. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to *that which was* written in the law of the Lord, 27. And his deeds, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

It was 13 years from Josiah's famous passover to his death; during which time, we may hope, things went well in his kingdom; that he prospered, and religion flourished; yet we are not entertained with the pleasing account of those years, but they are passed over in silence, because the people, for all this, were not turned from the love of their sins, nor God from the fierceness of his anger. The next news therefore we hear of Josiah, is, that he is cut off in the midst of his days and usefulness, before he is full 40 years old. We had this sad story, 2 Kings 23. 29, 30. here it is somewhat more largely related. That appears here, more than did there, which reflects such blame on Josiah, and such praise on the people, as one would not have expected.

I. Josiah was a very good prince; yet he is much to be blamed for his rashness and presumption in

going out to war against the king of Egypt, without cause or call. It was bad enough, as it appeared in the *Kings*, that he meddled with strife which belonged not to him. But here it looks worse; for, it seems, the king of Egypt sent ambassadors to him, to warn him against this enterprise, v. 21. He argues, 1. From principles of justice. The king of Egypt professes he had no design to do him any hurt, and therefore it was unfair, against common equity and the law of nations, for Josiah to take up arms against him. If even a *righteous man* engage in an *unrighteous cause*, let him not expect to prosper; *God is no respecter of persons*. See Prov. 3. 30.—25. 8. 2. From principles of religion. "*Goa is with me*; nay, *He commanded me to make haste*, and therefore, if thou retard my motions, thou *meddlest with God*." It cannot be that the king of Egypt only *pretended* this, (as Sennacherib did in a like case, 2 Kings 18. 25.) hoping thereby to make Josiah desist, because he knew he had a veneration for the word of God, for it is said here, (v. 22.) that the words of Necho were *from the mouth of God*; we must therefore suppose that either by a dream, or by a strong impulse upon his spirit, which he had reason to think was from God, or by Jeremiah; or some other prophet, he had ordered him to make war upon the king of Assyria. 3. From principles of policy. "*That he destroy thee not*; it is at thy peril, if thou engage against one that has both a better army, and a better cause, and God on his side."

It was not in wrath to Josiah, whose heart was upright with the Lord his God, but in wrath to a hypocritical nation, who were unworthy of so good a king, that he was so far infatuated, as not to hearken to those fair reasonings, and desist from his enterprise. He *would not turn his face from him*, but went in person, and fought the Egyptian army in the *valley of Megiddo*, v. 22. If perhaps he could not believe that the king of Egypt had a command from God to do what he did, yet, upon his pleading such a command, he ought to have consulted the oracles of God before he had gone out against him. His not doing that, was his great fault, and of fatal consequence. In this matter, he walked not in the ways of David his father; for had it been his case, he would have inquired of the Lord, *Shall I go up? Wilt thou deliver them into my hands?* How can we think to prosper in our ways, if we do not acknowledge God in them?

II. The people were a wicked people; yet they are much to be praised for lamenting the death of Josiah as they did. That Jeremiah lamented him, I do not wonder; he was the weeping prophet, and plainly foresaw the utter ruin of his country following upon the death of this good king. But it is strange to find that all Judah and Jerusalem, that stupid senseless people, *mourned for him*, (v. 24.) contrived how to have their mourning excited by singing-men and singing-women; how to have it spread through the kingdom: they made an ordinance in Israel, that the mournful ditties, penned on this sad occasion, should be learned and sung by all sorts of people. They contrived also how to have the remembrance of it perpetuated; these elegies were inserted in the collections of State Poems; they are written in the Lamentations. Hereby it appeared, 1. That they had some respect to their good prince, and that though they did not cordially comply with him in all his good designs, yet they could not but greatly honour him. Pious useful men will be manifested in the consciences even of those that will not be influenced by their example; and many that will not submit to the rules of serious godliness themselves, yet cannot but give it their good word, and esteem it in others. Perhaps those lamented Josiah when he was dead that were not thankful to God for him while he lived. The Israelites mur-

mured at Moses and Aaron while they were with them, and spoke sometimes of stoning them, and yet, when they died, they mourned for them forty days. We are often taught to value mercies by the loss of them, which, when we enjoyed them, we did not prize as we ought. 2. That they had some sense of their own danger, now that he was gone. Jeremiah told them, it is likely, of the evil they might now expect to come upon them, from which he was taken away; and so far they credited what he said, that they lamented the death of him that was their defence. Note, Many will more easily be persuaded to lament the miseries that are coming upon them, than to take the proper way by universal reformation to prevent them; will shed tears for their troubles, but will not be prevailed upon to part with their sins. But godly sorrow worketh repentance, and that repentance will be to salvation.

CHAP. XXXVI.

We have here, I. A short but sad account of the utter ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, within a few years after Josiah's death. 1. The history of it in the unhappy reigns of Jehoahaz, for 3 months, v. 1. 4. Jehoiakim, v. 5. 8. for 11 years; Jehoiachin 3 months, v. 9, 10, and Zedekiah 11 years, v. 11. Additions were made to the national guilt, and advances toward the national destruction, in each of those reigns. The destruction was, at length, completed in the slaughter of multitudes, v. 17. The plundering and burning of the temple and all the palaces, the desolation of the city, v. 18, 19, and the captivity of the people that remained, v. 20. 2. Some remarks upon it; that herein sin was punished. Zedekiah's wickedness, v. 12, 13. The idolatry the people were guilty of, v. 14. And their abuse of God's prophets, v. 15, 16. The word of God was herein fulfilled, v. 21. II. The dawning of the day of their deliverance in Cyrus's proclamation, v. 22, 23.

1. **THEN** the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. 2. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3. And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. 4. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt. 5. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD his God. 6. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 8. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Je-

rusalem: and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD. 10. And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here coming on by degrees. God so ordered it, to show that he has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners, but had rather they would turn and live, and therefore gives them both time and inducement to repent, and waits to be gracious. The history of these reigns was more largely recorded in the three last chapters of the second of Kings.

1. Jehoahaz was set up by the people, (v. 1.) but in one quarter of a year was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, and carried a prisoner to Egypt, and the land fined for setting him up, v. 2-4. Of this young prince we hear no more; had he trodden in the steps of his father's piety, he might have reigned long, and prospered; but we are told in the *Kings*, that *he did evil in the sight of the Lord*, and therefore his triumphing was short, and his joy but for a moment.

2. Jehoiakim was set up by the king of Egypt, and reigned 11 years. How low was Judah brought, when the king of Egypt, an old enemy to their land, gave what king he pleased to the kingdom, and what name he pleased to the king, v. 4. And he made Eliakim king, and called him *Jehoiakim*, in token of his authority over him. He did *that which was evil*, (v. 5.) nay, we read of the *abominations which he did*, (v. 8.) he was very wild and wicked; idolatries generally go under the name of abominations. We hear no more of the king of Egypt, but the king of Babylon came up against him, (v. 6.) seized him, and bound him with a design to carry him to Babylon; but, it seems, he either changed his mind, and suffered him to reign as his vassal, or death released the prisoner before he was carried away. However, the best and most valuable vessels of the temple were now carried away, and made use of in Nebuchadnezzar's temple in Babylon; (v. 7.) for, we may suppose, no temple in the world was so richly furnished as that of Jerusalem. The sin of Judah was, that they had brought the idols of the heathen into God's temple; and now their punishment was, that the vessels of the temple were carried away unto the service of the gods of the nations. If men will profane God's institutions by their sins, it is just with God to suffer them to be profaned by their enemies. These were the vessels which the false prophets flattered the people with hopes of the return of, Jer. 27. 16. But Jeremiah told them that the rest should go after them, (v. 22.) and they did so. But, as the carrying away of these vessels to Babylon began the calamity of Jerusalem, so Belshazzar's daring profanation of them there filled the measure of the iniquity of Babylon; for when he drank wine in them to the honour of his gods, the hand-writing on the wall presented him with his doom, Dan. 5. 2, &c. In the reference to the book of the *Kings*, concerning this Jehoiakim, mention is made of *that which was found in him*, (v. 8.) which seems to be meant of the treachery that was found in him toward the king of Babylon; but some of the Jewish writers understand it of certain private marks or signatures found in his dead body, in honour of his idol; such cuttings as God had forbidden, Lev. 19. 28.

3. Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, attempted to reign in his stead, and reigned long enough to show his evil inclination; but, after 3

months and 10 days, the king of Babylon sent and fetched him away captive, with more of the goodly vessels of the temple. He is here said to be 8 years old, but in *Kings* he is said to be 18 when he began to reign, so that this seems to be a mistake of the transcriber, unless we suppose that his father took him at 8 years old to join with him in the government, as some think.

11. Zedekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD his God, *and* humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, *speaking* from the mouth of the LORD. 13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. 14. Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy. 17. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; he gave *them* all into his hand. 18. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all *these* he brought to Babylon. 19. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21. To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

We have here an account of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Abraham, God's friend, was called out of that country, from Ur of the Chaldees, when God took him into covenant and communion with himself; and now his degenerate seed were carried into that

country again, to signify that they had forfeited all that kindness wherewith they had been loved for the father's sake, and the benefit of that covenant into which he was called; all was now undone again. Here we have,

I. The sins that brought this desolation.

1. Zedekiah, the king, in whose days it came, brought it upon himself by his own folly. For he conducted himself very ill both toward God and toward the king of Babylon. (1.) If he had but made God his Friend, that would have prevented the ruin. Jeremiah brought him messages from God, which, if he had given due regard to them, might have secured a lengthening of his tranquillity, but it is here charged upon him, that he *humbled not himself before Jeremiah*, v. 12. It was expected that this mighty prince, high as he was, should humble himself before a poor prophet, when he *spoke from the mouth of the Lord*; should submit to his admonitions, and be amended by them, to his counsels, and be ruled by them; should lay himself under the commanding power of the word of God in his mouth: because he would not thus make himself a servant to God, he is made a slave to his enemies. God will find some way or other to humble them that will not humble themselves. Jeremiah, as a prophet, was set *over the nations and kingdoms*, (Jer. 1. 10.) and, as mean a figure as he made, whoever would not humble themselves before him, found that it was at their peril. (2.) If he had but been true to his covenant with the king of Babylon, that would have prevented his ruin; but he *rebelled against him*, though he had sworn to be his faithful tributary, and perfidiously violated his engagements to him, v. 13. This was it that provoked the king of Babylon to deal so severely with him as he did. All nations looked upon an oath as a sacred thing, and on those that durst break through the obligations of it, as the worst of men, abandoned of God, and to be abhorred of all mankind: if therefore Zedekiah falsify his oath, *when, lo, he has given his hand, he shall not escape*, Ezek. 17, 18. Though Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen, an enemy, yet if, having sworn to him, he be false to him, he shall know *there is a God to whom vengeance belongs*. The thing that ruined Zedekiah, was, not only that he *turned not to the Lord God of Israel*, but that he *stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart, from turning to him*, that is, he was obstinately resolved not to return to him, would not lay his neck under God's yoke, nor his heart under the impressions of his word, and so, in effect, he *would not be healed, he would not live*.

2. The great sin that brought this destruction, was, idolatry; the priests and people went after *the abominations of the heathen*, forsook the pure worship of God for the lewd and filthy rites of the Pagan superstition, and so *polluted the house of the Lord*, v. 14. The priests, the chief of the priests, who should have opposed idolatry, were ringleaders in it. That place is not far from ruin, in which religion is already ruined.

3. The great aggravation of their sin, and that which filled the measure of it, was, the abuse they gave to God's prophets who were sent to call them to repentance, v. 15, 16. Where we have,

(1.) God's tender compassion toward them in sending prophets to them. Because he was the *God of their fathers*, in covenant with them, and whom they worshipped, (though this degenerate race forsook him,) therefore he *sent to them by his messengers*, to convince them of their sin, and warn them of the ruin they would bring upon themselves by it; *rising up betimes, and sending*, which denotes not only that he did it with the greatest care and concern imaginable, as men rise betimes to set their servants to work, when their heart is upon their

business; but that, upon their first deviation from God to idols, if they took but one step that way, God immediately sent to them by his messengers to reprove them for it; he gave them early, timely, notice both of their duty and danger. Let this quicken us to seek God early, that he rises betimes to send to us. The prophets that were sent, rose betimes to speak to them, were diligent and faithful in their office, lost no time, slipped no opportunity of dealing with them; and therefore God is said to rise betimes. The more pains ministers take in their work, the more will the people have to answer for, if it be all in vain. The reason given, why God by his prophets did thus strive with them, is, *because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place*, and would by these means have prevented their ruin. Note, The methods God takes to reclaim sinners by his word, by ministers, by conscience, by providences, are all instances of his compassion toward them, and his unwillingness that *any should perish*.

(2.) Their base and disingenuous carriage toward God, *v. 16, They mocked the messengers of God*, (which was a high affront to him that sent them,) despised his words in their mouths; and not only so, but mis-used the prophets, treating them as their enemies. The ill usage they gave Jeremiah who lived at this time, and which we read much of in the book of his prophecy, is an instance of this. This was an evidence of an implacable enmity to God, and an invincible resolution to go on in their sins. This brought wrath upon them without remedy, for it was sinning against the remedy. Nothing is more provoking to God, than abuses given to his faithful ministers; for what is done against them, he takes as done against himself: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Persecution was the sin that brought upon Jerusalem its final destruction by the Romans. See *Matt. 23. 34-37*. Those that mock at God's faithful ministers, and do all they can to render them despicable or odious, that vex and mis-use them, to discourage them, and to keep others from hearkening to them, should be reminded that a wrong done to an ambassador, is construed as done to the prince that sends him, and that the day is coming, when they will find it had been better for them, if they had been thrown *into the sea* with a mill-stone about their necks; for hell is deeper, and more dreadful.

II. The desolation itself, and some few of the particulars of it, which we had more largely, *2 Kings 25*.

1. Multitudes were put to the sword, *even in the house of their sanctuary, v. 17*. whither they fled for refuge, hoping that the holiness of the place would be their protection: but how could they expect to find it so, when they themselves had polluted it with their abominations? *v. 14*. Those that cast off the dominion of their religion, forfeit all the benefit and comfort of it. The Chaldeans not only paid no reverence to the sanctuary, but showed no natural pity either to the tender sex, or to venerable age. They forsook God, who had compassion on them, *v. 15*. and would have none of him; justly therefore are they given up into the hands of cruel men, that had no compassion on young man or maiden.

2. All the remaining vessels of the temple, great and small, and all the treasures, sacred and secular, the treasures of God's house, and of the king and his princes, were seized and brought to Babylon, *v. 18*.

3. The temple was burnt, the walls of Jerusalem demolished, the houses (called here the *palaces*, as *Ps. 48. 3*. so stately, rich, and sumptuous, were they) laid in ashes, and all the furniture, called here the *golden vessels thereof*, destroyed, *v. 19*. Let us see here what a woful havock sin makes, and,

as we tender the comfort and continuance of our estates, keep that worm from the root of them.

5. The remainder of the people that escaped the sword, were carried captives to Babylon, *v. 20*. impoverished, enslaved, insulted, and exposed to all the miseries, not only of a strange and barbarous land, but of an enemy's land, where those that hated them, bare rule over them. They were servants to those monarchs, and, no doubt, were ruled with rigour so long as that monarchy lasted. Now they sat down by the rivers of Babylon, with the streams of which they mingled their tears, *Ps. 137. 1*. And though there, it should seem, they were cured of idolatry; yet, as appears by the prophet Ezekiel, they were not cured of mocking the prophets.

5. The land lay desolate while they were captives in Babylon, *v. 21*. That fruitful land, the glory of all lands, was now turned into a desert, not tilled nor husbanded. The pastures were not clothed as they used to be, with flocks, nor the valleys with corn, but all lay neglected. Now this may be considered, (1.) As the just punishment of their former abuse of it. They had served Baal with its first fruits, *cursed therefore is the ground for their sakes*. Now the land *enjoyed her sabbaths, v. 21*. as God had threatened by Moses, *Lev. 26. 34*. and the reason there given, *v. 35*. is, "Because it did not rest on your sabbaths, you profaned the sabbath-day, did not observe the sabbatical year." They many a time ploughed and sowed their land in the 7th year when it should have rested, and now it lay unploughed and unsown for 10 times 7 years. Note, God will be no loser in his glory at last, by the disobedience of men: if the tribute be not paid, he will distrust and recover it, as he speaks, *Hos. 2. 9*. If they would not let the land rest, God would make it rest, whether they would or no. Some think they had neglected the observance of 70 sabbatical years in all, and just so many, by way of reprisal, the land now enjoyed; or if those that had been neglected, were fewer, it was fit that the law should be satisfied, with interest. We find that one of the quarrels God had with them at this time, was, for not observing another law which related to the 7th year, and that was the release of servants; see *Jer. 34. 13, &c.* (2.) Yet we may consider it as giving some encouragement to their hopes, that they should, in due time, return to it again. Had others come and taken possession of it they might have despaired of ever recovering it; but, while it lay desolate, it did, as it were, lie waiting for them again, and refuse to acknowledge any other owners.

22. Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished,) the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, *23*. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

These two last verses of this book have a double aspect.

I. They look back to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and show how that was accomplished, *v. 22*. God

had, by him, promised the restoring of the captives, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, at the end of 70 years; and that time to favour Sion, that set time, came at last. After a long and dark night, the day-spring from on high visited them. God will be found true to every word he has spoken.

2. They look forward to the history of Ezra, which begins with the repetition of these two last verses. They are there the introduction to a pleasant story, here they are the conclusion of a very melancholy one; and so we learn from them, that

though God's church be cast down, it is not cast off; though his people be corrected, they are not abandoned; though thrown into the furnace, yet not lost there, nor left there any longer than till the dross be separated. Though God contend long, he will not contend always. The Israel of God shall be fetched out of Babylon in due time, and even the dry bones made to live. It may be long first; but the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie; therefore, though it tarry, wait for it.